● 796 Kerala AW11

/For religious ceremonies and feasting associated with the Nayar Tali-rite, see category 588./

361 lived in bazaar streets in the towns, or some-
563 times in separate villages, where they were
served by low caste Hindu labourers; alternatively small groups of them might occupy Hindu
villages where they had the ritual rank of Iravas
(from whom they were chiefly converted), and
usually held lands on the same terms of triennial
tenure from Nayar kanakker.

564 The lower polluting castes and the exterior
783 castes had their own small temples, dedicated
to their own deities. They were forbidden to
approach the temples of the "good" castes and
564 might not take part in daily worship there. An-
796 nually, however, a large temple festival was
571 held in each Nayar, chiefly or royal Bhagavadi
temple. At such a festival, representatives of all the lower castes of the village attended and performed ceremonies and dances peculiar to their caste at approriate distances from the temple. Such festivals apparently reinforced the mutual rights and obligations of the several castes and dramatized the solidarity and also the social distance between them. In accordance with the normal range of their social relations, members of the lower castes usually attended such festivals only in their own or adjacent villages. At the festivals of the chiefly temple of the nad, however, members of "good" castes throughout the nad were required to participate; similarly, at festivals of the royal temples, representatives of the "good" castes throughout the kingdom were called to attend and express their allegiance to the ruler and his deity.

421 servants and serfs, of rents to the janmi, and
592 the receipt of rents from tenants. Today in law
672 as it was codified by the British the legal personality
of the property-group is clearly recognized:
suits concerning property-disputes, for
example, are filed in the name of a property-group
and not of its karanavan as an individual.

592 (b) Ritual Observances of the Group

Besides having important legal functions, the
property-group was united in rites of various
kinds. Its members acted jointly as a host-
[561] group in inviting neighbouring groups of the village
to rites de passage such as name-giving
(28th day), first rice-feeding (6th month) and the
ceremonies associated with a death. At the tali-
[796] rite, the lineage as a whole held the ceremony in
its oldest house, but expenses were divided between
the property-groups and food for the feasts
[764] cooked separately in their houses. Similarly at
a death, the whole lineage observed pollution
and attended the cremation, gathering of bones
and ashes on the 7th day, and purification and
feasting on the 15th day, but members of the
property-group, male and female, each made
offerings of cooked rice to the spirit in their
[765] courtyard each day during the pollution period.
The rites of chief mourner were performed by
the man considered most closely related to the
deceased - her eldest son in the case of a woman,
and the man next younger to him in the
property-group, in the case of a man.

592 The propitiation of snakes and of dead male
782 forbears also united the group's members. The

162 the most numerous and ancient group, claim that their church was founded by St. Thomas. The Portuguese converted some of them by force to Roman Catholicism and also made many converts from the lowest Hindu castes. Christians are concentrated chiefly in Cochin and Travancore.

113 (3) For a fuller discussion of the meaning of this ceremony see Gough, "Female Initiation Rites on the Malabar Coast", forthcoming in J.R.A.I.

(4) E. Colson and M. Gluckman, Seven Tribes of British Central Africa (1951), p. 129. [102]

787 753 (5) Occasionally the astrologer may divine that the spirit of a recent ancestress is causing sickness to women or children. An emergency propitiation of cooked food is then made to here in the ancestor-shrine.

769 778 (6) In a new house there may be no stool at all, unless the house was built some time before the partition by a man who died before it became occupied by the new property-group, and who thus becomes its first karanavan-spirit. If there are no stools the members of the group go back to their parent-house for ancestral propitiations for one or two generations.

212 (7) Nayar women like men could traditionally read and write Malayalam, and keep accounts.

796 (8) Onam is a harvest-festival in September; Vishu the New Year's Day, in March; and Tiruvadhira, a women's festival to Kama Devan, the Hindu god of passion.

113 (9) Murdock, Social Structure, 1949, p. 10.

(10) From the Book of Duarte Barbosa, (Hakluyt

613 of the group, maintaining its accounts in her own hands and counsel-
592 ing the kāranavan on his transactions with outsiders. When the oldest
woman was the kāranavan's own or classificatory younger sister or
sister's daughter her role was unequivocally subordinate and a formal
division of duties was common.

613 *Rites of the Property Group* The property group jointly invited en-
592 angar households to the ceremonies of name giving, first rice feed-
796 ing, first menstruation, and death. The lineage as a whole held the
tāli rite in its oldest house. However, expenses were divided between
the property groups and food was cooked separately in their homes.
613 Similarly, at a death the whole lineage observed pollution and at-
592 tended the cremation, the gathering of bones on the seventh day, and
764 the purification and feasting on the fifteenth and sixteenth days. But
men and women of the deceased's own property group offered cooked
rice to the spirit in their courtyard each day during the pollution period. The rites of chief mourner were performed by the junior man considered most closely related to the deceased—her eldest son in the case of a woman, and the man immediately junior to him in the property group in the case of a man.

613 The propitiation of cobra gods and of dead matrilineal forebears
592 also united the group's members. The cobra deities (*nāgas*) could
776 inflict or avert sickness in general but were especially believed re-
842 sponsible for the fertility or barrenness[7] of taravād women. If a
782 woman failed to conceive, a performance was held at which men and
787 women of a wandering caste called Pulluvar played instruments and
[753] sang songs to entice the cobras to appear. A group of women of the
taravād, who had purified themselves by sex continence and fasting
for several days, then became possessed by the snake gods. They performed a wild dance, bowing and swaying in a circle and sweeping their hair along the ground. In this condition they might speak with the voices of the gods and announce whatever propitiations were necessary to appease them. Sometimes one or more of the women fell into a trance.

776 It seems reasonable to suppose that the snake gods were worshipped
842 as phallic symbols. They were definitely not regarded as the spirits of
dead matrilineal forebears, yet were capable of withholding fertility or of causing women to conceive. Perhaps, therefore, they symbolized the procreative powers of past genitors of the property group, who

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[7] Snake gods inflicted barrenness; the lineage goddess inflicted miscarriages and sickness in childbirth.

A husband normally visited his wife after eating supper in his 595
natal home, and left before breakfast. Even today in many orthodox
Nayar homes men eat regularly in their taravāds and accept food in
their wives' homes only on special invitation from their wives'
kāranavans. Traditionally a husband placed his weapons outside his [201]
wife's door as a sign to other men that he was within. My informants
in a Cochin village reported that, within living memory in the late
nineteenth century, if two husbands called on the same night the one
who came last might sleep outside on the veranda. Usually a woman's
regular husbands knew each other and informally agreed upon their
turns.

The relationship with the visiting husband was called *sambandham* 585
(Sanskrit, "joining together"). At the start of a girl's first sambandham 595
her husband came to her house privately at night, sometimes with a
few friends of his own age. In the presence of the girl's kin he presented
her with a white cloth of the kind worn as a skirt. The occasion
was not marked by feasting. Later husbands might or might not
present the cloth. A transient visitor is said to have left a gold coin
beneath the woman's pillow, and a regular husband might do the
same on the first night of his union.

While his relationship lasted, a regular husband was expected to 595
make gifts to his wife at the three main festivals of the year. Vishu, in 431
April, was the Malayalam New Year; Onam, in September, was a [796]
harvest festival; Tiruvadira, in December, was a women's festival to
Kama Devan, the god of passion. The gifts were of bathing oil, [776]
bananas, wafer biscuits, and betel leaves and areca nuts for chewing.
In some areas a husband also gave a loin cloth of superior quality at
Onam. The gifts were prepared by women of the husband's taravād, [613]
and he should present them in person to each of his wives on the
festival day. If a husband failed to make these gifts it was a tacit sign [586]
that he had ended the relationship. It should be noted that the gifts,
trivial in value, were gifts of courtship and were in no sense maintenance.
Bathing oil is a feminine toilet requisite; wafer biscuits are [302]
delicacies served at feasts; and the giving of chewing materials between [262]
a man and a woman is everywhere in South India associated [276]
with courtship or with the first night of marriage. A husband had no
obligation at all to maintain his wife, for she received her food, [584]
shelter, and regular clothing from her taravād. [585]

The only other obligations of a husband came at the birth of a 843
child. When a woman became pregnant it was necessary for one or 595
more men of appropriate caste to acknowledge possible biological 431

the father's village, if this was different from the mother's. In this 614
way, matrilineal kin might become widely scattered between many 564
villages, while remembering the village from which their matrilineal 591
forebears sprang.

THE SUB-CLAN

This group corresponded to the clan in Central Kerala. It was a 614
segment of the clan whose members seem to have been located within [634]
one chiefdom. The structure and functions of this group were identical [765]
with those of the clan in Central Kerala, the members observing death [844]
and birth pollutions as well as exogamy.

THE LINEAGE [783]

As in Central Kerala, the lineage was that portion of a clan located 613
in one neighborhood (tara). Traditionally there seem to have been
about six to ten lineages in one neighborhood, as in Central Kerala.
A lineage was internally segmented and segmentation was relevant
to the reversion of property. Exogamy, the observance of pollution, [783]
and the extension of kinship terms inhered in the lineage. Perhaps
because village headship was weaker than in Calicut and each commoner
lineage stronger as an organized group of kinsfolk, rites connected
with the lineage were more prominent in the North than in
the Center (Gough, 1958). There were few or no neighborhood [346]
temples of Bhagavadi. Instead, each lineage held a grand annual [796]
festival to its own patron Bhagavadi and to minor male deities, in
which the lower castes took part. We have mentioned blood feuds [776]
between lineages, which indicate that a lineage was, in popular [627]
thought, if not in law, considered responsible for its members' physical
protection.

Little is known today of the enangar relationship in North Kerala. 613
It did exist, and enangar are said to have attended life-crisis rites and 588
to have had some function in neighborhood caste trials of offenders
against religious law. However, enangar did not tie the tālis of immature
girls and did not participate in any form of group marriage.
Among Nambiars and in most of the aristocratic Nayar lineages a
girl's tāli was tied before puberty by some local Nambudiri Brahman.
He was often an old man, and he appears to have had no right of
cohabitation. The woman and her children did not observe pollution [765]
at his death. As far as I can judge the tāli rite in this area was merely [783]
an initiation rite which, at least in the nineteenth century, removed
the ritual danger of cohabiting with a virgin (Gough, 1955). It also [835]
instituted the etiquette associated with incest prohibitions between
the girl and her matrilineal kinsmen.

obligations, some fathers, especially kāranavans, kept their children 593
residing with them for most of their lives and gave them property. A 613
child owed his father obedience and respect. If a man divorced his [431]
wife her children also left him and might see little of him thereafter. [586]
However, they had to observe ritual pollution at his death and his [765]
eldest son took part in his funeral rites along with the chief matrilineal
heir. The eldest son also made annual offerings to his dead father's [769]
spirit. In general the relationship with the father was thought of as
intimate and loving. Children must respect him and a daughter must
not touch him after her puberty. But having no legal authority, the
father was not feared. His role was sharply contrasted with that of
the mother's brother. Uncles were said to teach by scolding and [604]
punishment; fathers, by persuasion and laughter.

The father's kin had privileges and obligations at life-crisis rites— 613
most of which took place in the individual's taravād house—and were 796
feasted and made gifts at the ceremonies of first pregnancy, naming,
first rice feeding, tāli tying, marriage, first menstruation, and death. 553
At the naming ceremony, when a baby was one month old, the father's
mother chose the name, the father's father conferred it, and the father
presented the child with a gold waistband. The kāranavan fulfilled
these roles in Central Kerala.

A person was forbidden to marry his father's sibling or paternal 582
parallel cousin of the father's property group. Affectionate respect was 602
the proper attitude toward all the father's older kin. The paternal
grandmother played with a child but did not idolize him as she did 603
her daughter's child, for he was not of her taravād. Unless he was also
a child's kāranavan, the paternal grandfather was a distant kinsman
who had little to do with his grandchild. The mother's father, on the
other hand, usually doted on his grandchild and was a cherished
companion.

Male cross cousins had a joking relationship and were often close 605
companions. Their relationship might be tinged with hostility concerning
the property of their respective father and mother's brother. [578]
Sometimes, at least in the nineteenth century, they quarreled openly
over the inheritance and became enemies thereafter. Male and female
cross cousins had a joking relationship with implicit sexual privileges
if the girl was younger than the man. A boy who returned to his [582]
taravād at puberty often married his matrilateral cross cousin thereafter.
Even if she married someone else he might sleep with her [836]
illicitly before or after the marriage. Elders were either ignorant or [837]

The wives of her elder matrilineal kinsmen figured prominently in 602
the life-crisis rites of a girl, performing the ritual acts done by 613
enangar women in Central Kerala. 796

Because of residence patterns men had less contact than did women 613
with the property groups of their spouses. They must be invited to
all ceremonies and had ritual duties in those connected with their 602
own children. As sambandhakkar of a property group, the husbands of its female members were usually consulted formally by its kāranavan before he undertook important matters such as building houses or dividing property. He was not, however, obliged to follow their advice.

Kinship Terms

A. MATRILINEAL KIN 601

The pattern of terms was the same as in Central Kerala. Lexically, 184
the only difference was that MoMo and her sisters (A1) were called *acchamma* (literally, "father's mother"), a term extended to them from FaMo. This usage probably resulted from the fact that a child normally recognized FaMo earlier than MoMo and had more contact with her.

B. AFFINES AND NON-MATRILINEAL COGNATES

In North Kerala, as might be expected, there were customary kinship terms for the patrilateral kin. The terms for affines and non-matrilineal cognates were as follows.

(1) *Bhārya*. M. speaking. Wi. Reference only.

(2) *Bartāvu*. F. speaking. Hu. Reference only.

(3) *Sambandhakkar*. M. and F. speaking. Collective. Husbands of women of ego's lineage, primarily of ego's property group. Reference only.

(4) *Acchappan* ("Father's father"). M. and F. speaking. FaFa and FaFaBr. FaFaSiHu, FaMoBr, FaMoSiHu. MoFa and MoFaBr. MoFaSiHu, MoMoSiHu.

(5) *Acchamma* ("Father's mother"). FaMo and FaMoSi. FaFaBrWi, FaFaSi and FaMoBrWi. MoFaSi, MoMo, MoMoSi, MoFaBrWi.

(6) *Amma* ("Mother"). M. and F. speaking. Extended from Mo and MoSi to FaSi and FaBrWi. FaSi is called *valiya* ("big") mother or *elaya* ("younger") mother according to her age in relation to the father. FaBrWi is so designated according to FaBr's age in relation to Fa.

(7) *Acchan*. M. and F. speaking. Fa, mother's current husband,

769

121 like the cult of lineage ghosts, are non-Sanskritic. I discuss the three categories of
613 cults in that order, and then refer briefly to modern changes in the cults.

THE CULT OF LINEAGE GHOSTS

769 Each traditional Nāyar house contains a room devoted to lineage ghosts. Within
353 the shrine are placed small, low stools (*pīṭhams*). On each of these it is believed that
778 a particular ghost comes to sit on the days when offerings are made.

769 In property groups of the aristocratic lineages of village headmen and district
613 chiefs, which own more land than do commoner Nāyars, family histories recorded in palm leaf documents may contain the names and achievements of twenty or more
554 *kāranavans* extending back over two or three hundred years. In such lineages, whose
[217] property groups divide less frequently than do those of commoner Nāyars, the *kāranavans'*
[778] spirits are housed in a special building in the courtyard south of the ancestral house. Commoner Nāyars care somewhat less for their ancestry. Sometimes they have only three or four stools for their lineage ghosts and remember by name only those who died within the last hundred years or whose lives were in some way remarkable. Remarkable *kāranavans* are those who fought bravely in battles or received honor from chief or king, those who earned property on behalf of their matrilineal groups, or those who died prematurely through accident, murder, epidemic or suicide.

769 Regular offerings are made only to *kāranavans*, for only *kāranavans* hold legal
613 authority and only their names tend to appear in documents which survive for posterity.
782 On the advice of the astrologer, however, a *taravād* may, in emergency, propitiate the ghost of an ancestress or of a man who died before becoming *kāranavan*. But such ghosts are always those who died within the lifetime of living members.

769 The lineage ghosts are regularly propitiated[5] on the new moon days of Karkidagam
776 (July-August) and Tulām (October-November). Food is cooked in the kitchen by
613 women of the matrilineal household, and a large portion is placed on a plantain leaf
261 for each of the ghosts. It includes curried meat and vegetables, fried paddy, beaten rice, fuits, and sweet puddings of various kinds. Toddy and arrack were traditionally
782 served along with the meal. If a dead *kāranavan* is known to have enjoyed special foods during life, he receives a large portion of these foods. Occasionally, even in the past, individual Nāyars have been vegetarians. The spirits of vegetarian *kāranavans* may not be served with meat and are housed in a separate shrine. When the dishes are prepared, they are carried quickly to the shrine so that the ghosts may partake of their essence before others have tasted or smelled them. The living *kāranavan* places the leaves before the stools in the presence of men junior to him in the property group and then closes the door of the shrine. Age-rank is observed in making the offerings. For each spirit, in addition to its own leaf, is briefly offered the food later placed before the stools of spirits junior to it. Similarly, the vegetables of vegetarian ghosts are first offered to meat eaters who were senior to them, and the vegetables (but not the meat) cooked for meat eating ghosts are first offered to vegetarian ghosts who were their seniors. After a few minutes the *kāranavan* reopens the door and distributes the food, to be eaten by all members of the *taravād*. Women take no part in
[183] offering the food and may not enter the ancestral shrine on this day. They are also
[562] forbidden to enter it during menstrual and birth pollutions, and all members are forbidden entry during the fifteen days of pollution following a death.

000 Traditionally, at the close of offerings to the ghosts, men of the *taravād* might

Traditionally, at the close of offerings to the ghosts, men of the taravād might become drunk with toddy and arrack. In this condition, one or more young men 796
might undergo possession by one of the ghosts. He performed a frenzied dance and 769
called out to the assembled members with the voice of the ghost, declaring its will 613
and thanking or threatening the *taravād* on its behalf. I heard of only one *taravād* 873
where this custom persisted. Shamanistic possession by the goddess Bhagavatī or by 782
the god Aiyappan is, however, still prevalent among rural Nāyars, and such religious [776]
possession is still more common among the lower castes. [784]

In some *taravāds*, propitiation of lineage ghosts accompanies that of various deities 769
associated with the *taravād*. Chief of these is the lineage's patron goddess (*dharma* 776
devī). The goddess, though known by different names in different *taravāds*, is always 782
thought of as a species of the generic goddess Bhagavadi or Bhādrakāli, the chief 613
deity of the Nāyars. Each group of Nāyar *taravāds* in a village usually possesses in
common a temple dedicated to Bhādrakāli, but each *taravād* has, in addition, its [346]
own goddess. Cults of the village goddess are more important in Cochin, and of the [184]
taravād goddess, in Kottayam. The village goddess is believed capable of withholding [753]
or inflicting on the population wholesale misfortunes of a kind which strike all men alike—smallpox, cholera, flood, drought, cyclone, cattle epidemic, or defeat in an intervillage feud. Such inflictions result from failure to propitiate the goddess or failure to uphold the moral laws of caste. The *taravād* goddess concerns herself with its members' private morality and inflicts such individual misfortunes as fever, barrenness in women or cattle, or grave financial loss.

In aristocratic *taravāds*, the goddess and the lineage ghosts may nowadays be [346]
housed together in an ancient gynasium (*kalari*) near the ancestral house—a building formerly devoted to the military training of the *taravād's* youth. The ghosts may then be propitiated with cooked food on the same day on which a cock is sacrificed to the patron goddess. In such rites, propitiation of both spirits and goddess are associated with the *taravād's* former martial glory. In the rites there usually figure one or more ancestral swords which the male forebears used during their lives. These swords are the property of the goddess and are propitiated by the *kāranvan* as representatives of the deity.

Lineage ghosts have some concern with the *taravād's* internal morality. If its 769
members fail in hospitality to guests, squander their income, or neglect their property, 626
the ghosts may inflict misfortunes on one or more members of the group. However, 782
failure to propitiate the ghosts correctly is the offence most likely to provoke retribution. 613
Conversely, if offerings are made correctly to the ghosts, they will help to preserve the *taravād* from misfortune.

The ghosts vary in their severity and in the wrongs which they punish. A *kāranavan* who amassed much property is most likely to resent extravagance on the part of his successors. Forebears who died prematurely are more punitive than those who died peacefully in old age. All ghosts, however, are somewhat capricious: a small offense may provoke stern retribution, and misdemeanors on the part of one adult may result in the sickness of another or of a child of the property group. In particular, a forebear who was injured or insulted by his juniors during life or after his death may wreak vengeance on the *taravād* even down to the seventh or eighth generation. One instance from a village headman's lineage in Kottayam will illustrate such retribution.
In 1798, the property group was dying out for lack of women, and the *kāranavan* [597]
adopted a woman and her children from a related segment of his lineage. After the [429]

769 No clear distinction is made between alien ghosts and minor malevolent deities,
776 or demons, which are also sometimes called *pretams* in Cochin. Some demons are found
[782] throughout Malabar. Chief of these is Kuttichāttan, a spirit capable of all kinds of
poltergeist activities. Sometimes, on the advice of an astrologer, a *taravād* privately
[564] sets up a shrine to Kuttichāttan and arranges for his annual propitiation by a low caste
173 person in the same manner as an alien ghost. Often, indeed, local myths of particular
769 Kuttichāttans suggest that they have been derived from alien ghosts, whose legends
776 became fancifully embroidered with miraculous elements. The story of one Kutti-
chāttan, in this case enshrined in a Nambūdiri Brahman garden and propitiated by a
782 washerman, will illustrate this process. The god was said to have been born from a sacrificial fire during ancestral ceremonies in a Brahman house. The Brahman house-owner brought him up, and when he was adult sent him to graze cattle as a serf. One day the Brahman's red-horned bull was missing, and the serf admitted that he had killed and eaten it. The Brahman tied him to the rafters of the cowshed and had him beaten to the point of death. Afterwards, the serf turned into a Kuttichāttan and disappeared, but hovered above the Nambūdiri household bringing misfortune until a shrine was set up for him. Educated Nāyar informants surmised that the spirit had originally been that of an executed serf, later glorified by his propitiants as Kutti-
782 chāttan. Similarly, Kadangōtt Makkam, whose story was related above, is spoken
769 of as a form of Bhagavadi in some *taravāds* where she is propitiated.

I have so far mentioned the kinds of alien ghosts which may be attached to individual
184 *taravāds* in Cochin. In fact, however, cults of spirits and deities of the village are
776 grander and more numerous in Cochin than are those of the *taravād*. This parallels
564 the fact that the Cochin village was traditionally highly centralized as a unit of local
796 government. In this area, the temple of the village goddess Bhagavadi is managed
[794] either by a Nāyar village headman's lineage or collectively by a village community of
commoner Nāyars. Only the Nāyars and castes above them might traditionally
[613] enter the temple, but all castes owed allegiance to the deity and took part in her
annual festival. The lowest castes of former serfs, and some other polluting castes
such as washermen, took part in the festival through the medium of one or more
minor malevolent deities or particularly important local ghosts which occupied small
[753] shrines at a distance from the main temple. Such spirits were thought of as servants
of the goddess, and at her will could "sow the seeds" of smallpox or other misfortunes
in the village. To avert such misfortune not only must the Nāyars and other high
castes propitiate the goddess herself, but the lower castes must also assemble, bringing
imitation bullocks and horses—the vehicles of the deity's demon servants—and make
[787] offerings to these demons. Selected persons from these lower castes became possessed by the village ghosts or demons and, in masked dances, made oracular pronouncements both to their own and the higher castes. During the festival, and for several weeks before it, Nāyar households must also entertain these shamans privately in the courtyards of their houses and make gifts of grain to them which warded off the demons' wrath.

769 In Kottayam, the village was traditionally less centralized. Each Nāyar *taravād*
184 was an independent landowning body owing only tenuous allegiance to a chief. Cults
776 of deities and ghosts associated with particular *taravāds* are therefore more prominent
796 than are those of village temples, and it is in the former rather than the latter that
564 ritual cooperation between high and low castes is most prominent. Whereas a Cochin
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taravād may enshrine only one or two alien ghosts particularly associated with it· 184
leaving the majority of local ghosts to be propitiated at the central village temple· 776
a wealthy Nāyar *taravād* in Kottayam builds shrines in its garden for six or eight 796
alien ghosts and finances elaborate propitiations on their behalf. Such spirits are in 564
Kottayam called *teyyams*. As in Cochin, the spirits are often the ghosts of Nāyar or
low caste persons who died violent deaths—for example, girls who died violently 613
before marriage, women excommunicated or executed for sexual offences, persons 782
killed by lightning, servants executed by their masters, or warriors who died in battle.
Usually, miraculous elements are interwoven into their legends. Sometimes, they
become merged with common minor deities such as Vettakkorumagan, Kandhākaranan,
or some species of Bhagavadi. In a few cases, they have become associated
with some episode from the puranic myths and their human origin is lost sight of.
As in the village temple rites of Cochin, these ghosts in Kottayam are propitiated,
on behalf of the Nāyar *taravād*, by selected persons from the lower castes. These are
chiefly Vannans (washermen) and Malayans (exorcists).[22] Annually, the propitiants
assemble in the Nāyar courtyard and recite the myths of origin of their spirits. Later,
they make and receive blood sacrifices to the spirits, and finally, while possessed by [787]
them, perform spectacular masked dances and declare the spirits' satisfaction to an
assembled company of many castes. These festivals take place throughout the whole
of several nights in the month of January to February and draw vast crowds from the
surrounding neighborhood.[23]

I have so far dealt with modes of propitiation of, and possession by, alien ghosts. 787
In addition, both in Cochin and Kottyam, Nāyars believe that certain persons can, 754
through appropriate rites and spells, gain private control over alien ghosts and minor
deities and engage in witchcraft or sorcery through their power. In what I call witchcraft,[24] 564
the individual uses the power of his patron spirit in order to take the form of a
bull, dog, jackal, or other animal. In this form he touches his foe in the night, causing [753]
him to fall ill with fever, to become insane, or even to die. Witches always belong to
one of the lowest castes of Parayans, Pulayans, Pānans or (in Kottayam) Malayans. [761]
They usually attack persons of Nāyar or other high caste whom they themselves hate.
Occasionally, however, a normal person of any caste, even a Nāyar, may hire a witch
to attack a personal enemy.

A sorcerer performs rites and recites spells to an alien ghost or minor deity over which he has control and causes it to pass magically into the body of an enemy, thus bringing about fever, miscarriages in women, insanity or death. Sorcerers can also bring about the deaths of cattle. Nāyars attribute sorcery chiefly to lower caste persons. For whereas the Nāyars predominantly worship Bhagavadi and certain Sanskrit deities, the castes below Nāyars specialize in the propitiation of evil ghosts and minor deities, and it is solely with these lower supernatural beings that witchcraft and sorcery are associated. Washermen, astrologers and umbrellamakers, who specialize in exorcising ghosts from the bodies of patients, are particularly suspected by Nāyars of themselves engaging in sorcery. Nāyars do, however, occasionally suspect Nāyars of other lineages, particularly affines with whom they have quarreled, of practicing sorcery or of hiring low caste witches or sorcerers to attack them.

Witchcraft does not usually require the diagnosis of an astrologer. A Nāyar of nervous disposition simply suspects that a low caste man has bewitched him if he falls ill after encountering an animal in the night. Sorcery is usually diagnosed by an

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dons his mask and becomes possessed by his *teyyam*, he may adopt an authoritative 764
or aggressive attitude to his Nāyar hosts, demanding gifts or threatening them with 564
misfortune before conferring his blessing. He may not, of course, physically attack 782
the Nāyars. Indeed, he is, while possessed, likely to solicit admiration by inflicting 613
physical suffering on himself, usually by burning himself with torches or rolling in
the red hot ashes of a fire. After the oracular pronouncements, having doffed his mask, [787
the officiant again becomes the servant of the *taravād* and humbly accepts his fee. 085]
For the low caste officiant, therefore, these festivals permit a limited, stylized expression of aggression and a temporary assumption of authority toward their high caste masters. At the same time, the festivals underline both the need for interdependence between the castes, and ultimately, the lower castes' permanent, secular role as submissive servants.

Functions of the cults of alien ghosts. My discussion of alien ghost institutions in the 769
general context of Nāyar handling of aggression has necessarily pointed to some of 182
their social and psychic functions. These may, it seems, be summarized as follows. 152
First, the cults permitted, in a harmless manner, the handling of aggression which
arose in relations between castes. Second, whether or not witchcraft or sorcery were [754
actually practiced, the belief that those whom he wrongfully harassed could arm
themselves with these ritual weapons must have acted as a deterrent to the Nāyar 626]
authority who was tempted to oppress low caste subordinates, or to favor his affines at the expense of his matrilineal juniors. Through witchcraft and sorcery, alien ghosts, therefore, might help to prevent injustices which could not readily be brought before a secular authority.

Third, these institutions brought together in ritual cooperation the very categories 769
of persons whose mutual ambivalence provided the ultimate motive force for the 564
institutions themselves. In the case of witchcraft and sorcery, there existed a compli- 182
cated interplay of hostilities and alliances which, over time, balanced each other. All Nāyars feared the harmful supernatural power of the lower castes, and this gave unity to their caste. In a particular instance, however, a Nāyar who believed himself attacked by an individual low caste practitioner, or by another Nāyar with the help of such a practitioner, could obtain relief only by engaging the ritual assistance of some other
officiant from one of the suspected castes. In the case of the cults of alien ghosts institu- [152
tionally attached to his *taravād* and his village temple, it seems that the Nāyar's 154]
generalized fear of and hostility to outgroups was turned outside the area of human relations and focussed upon supernatural agents feared by all. But again, only willing and friendly ritual cooperation with lower caste officiants could ward off supernatural attacks from the whole community, including the Nāyars.

It seems probable to me that one of the most important functions of all religious 796
ritual, if not the important, is this resolution of conflict within individuals and within 769
groups. The manner in which this is achieved varies greatly. The rituals of rebellion[25] 152
and the initiation rites[26] analyzed by Gluckman, for example, on the surface bear little 182
resemblance to Nāyar cults of the dead. But as Gluckman has shown, their broad social functions are the same. Institutionalized religious ritual, like the private rites of obsessional neurotics, permits to the individual a disguised expression of his aggression, while at the same time reassuring him that his control over the direct physical expression of aggression is unimpaired. But institutionalized ritual does far more than this. It has not only temporary therapeutic value for the individual, but is also interwoven

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769 with social, legal, and economic institutions in such a way that it resolves recurrent
conflicts within them and thus affords them support. For institutionalized ritual
152 draws into cooperation, in common acts and a common belief system, the very cate-
182 gories of persons upon whose mutual ambivalence the rites are founded. More than this, by bringing home to the participants a sense of their common helplessness in face of the dangers and mysteries which confront man both in his own nature and in his world, ritual appears to transmute their very hatred into sentiments of mutual dependence and love.

MODERN CHANGES IN CULTS OF THE DEAD

178 At the present day the cult of lineage ghosts tends to be retained in its traditional
769 form only in the most traditional households—those having residential and economic
613 norms most closely approximating the traditional pattern, and living in the old style of ancestral house. In the new houses built in the past twenty years there is no ancestral shrine, and varying degrees of modification and attrition are observable in ancestral and death rites in these modern types of household.

596 In households comprising an elementary family or a congerie of mixed matrilineal,
cognatic, and affinal kin, the cult of lineage ghosts has died out in its traditional form.
178 In some families emergency propitiations are still made to the ghosts of kinsfolk on
769 the advice of an astrologer. But such a ghost may now be that of any relative who died
782 in the house, and the propitiation may be carried out by any adult male resident.
In one Cochin house, for example, lived an old woman, her elder widowed daughter,
[613] and her children, and her younger daughter, daughter's husband and their children.
The old woman's son, who would traditionally have been *kāranavan*, had taken his share of property and gone to live with his wife. When the younger daughter's small girl fell ill with fever, the astrologer advised a propitiation of the ghost of the elder daughter's husband, who had died in this house and been buried near it three years previously. The food offering was made by the child's father in a corner of the living room. In this case neither ghost nor propitiant were members of the *taravād*. Fifty years ago neither one of them could have been concerned in this *taravād's* ancestral rites.

613 In some households, regular collective offerings to lineage ghosts are still made in
178 July and October, but the form of the rites has changed. Cooked rice balls are offered
as in *śrāddham* instead of the old offerings of cooked food. In Cochin in 1952 there
769 was no prohibition of alcohol. But even so, many modern families despised the old
782 offerings of toddy, meat, and arrack and substituted vegetarian food with coconut juice, or else performed the Sanskritic rites. Even in traditional *taravāds* whose members have not yet divided their property, educated *kāranavans* are now often unwilling to perform the old-fashioned rites. Such was the case in one wealthy *taravād* of a Kottayam village headman. The *kāranavan*, a university graduate and a politician, felt that he must maintain the old ceremonies for the sake of his *taravād's* local reputation, but would not perform them himself. Instead he persuaded his younger son to carry out the offerings to the lineage ghosts and the annual cock sacrifice to Bhagavadi. This youth was, of course, of another *taravād*. Traditionally he would not even have been permitted to enter his father's ancestral shrine. In many households there are now no ancestral propitiations, for many now deny to lineage ghosts the power to bless or harm.

825
171 deity. Besides these, there are innumerable private snake shrines, particularly in pious households.

All diseases or misfortunes are due to the neglect of snakes.
753 Leprosy, itches, sterility of women and deaths due to poison,
825 are attributed to the anger of snake gods. The remedy for
171 snake-bite lies in the propitiation of serpents through worship
782 at the snake shrine. If no such shrine exists, then a diligent
778 search is made and a 'snake stone' is dug up from the vicinity.
Thereafter this accidental find of the snake stone is duly consecrated and worshipped, and all the erstwhile troubles are attributed to the inadvertent neglect of the sacred stone. The person
[766] dying of snake-bite is taboo, because his body is supposed to be
occupied thereafter by the snake god, and it needs to be disposed of in a special manner with particular reverence and specific rituals.

771 Among the Nayars of South India snake worship assumes
825 unique importance. It is popularly believed that in early times a
778 Pambakattu Nambutiri brahmin brought the serpents with him
● 796 and left them in their present abode. He however promised to
[173] return one day but never did. Strangely enough, in Travancore,
a Pambakattu Nambutiri family still resides and is not permitted to enter the Manarsalil temple for fear that the snakes might leave the area and follow the brahmin to his abode. In a special ceremony called *kavu muttam* or the shifting of the snake shrines from one place to another in the compound of the house—if accidentally the shrine is awkwardly situated in a plot of land where construction is to begin—the Pambakattu Nambutiri is called specially to do the necessary shifting ceremony. He purifies the new area and transfers the shrine to the newly consecrated spot, to the accompaniment of sacred incantations. Thereafter there is feasting and the brahmin is paid money and is presented with a set of new clothes. This is in striking coincidence with the legend of origin, and lends credence to the story of the origin of snake worship, particularly in Manarsalil temple in Quilon, as being connected with Pambakattu Nambutiri brahmins.

778 The plans of snake shrines have much in common, though some are small and some big. The Manarsalil temple

778 hoods are placed in the shrine, and no insect or rat or other
771 animal is killed in the consecrated spot. Even broken
bits of snake images are worshipped and they are set
up in a row. No image or snake-stone is permitted to fall
down, as that is considered to be inauspicious. On the inner
surface of the hood of the snake is carved a seated female figure.

825 These sacred snakes are supposed to be different from the
771 ordinary serpents. They are given the status of benign family
776 deities and are presumed to possess strange powers and the
attribute of gods. They are revered and they deign to live
only under ceremonially pure conditions and surroundings,
accepting only vegetarian offerings and abhorring animal
[782] sacrifice. In contrast mention may be made of the Thlen of the
Khasis which demands human blood as offering. In the event
825 however of their abode being polluted, e. g., by a menstruating
783 woman, the serpents are angered, and unless propitiated may
782 cause disease or harm to the offender. The sacred serpent
776 called *sarpam* is supposed to be small, about 6 to 18 inches
[841] in length and is golden in colour. It is highly poisonous
but ordinarily does not do any harm. If properly propitiated
it guards the family and brings good luck and prosperity;
[753] but if neglected, insulted, or otherwise uncared for, it causes
skin disease, leprosy or loss of sight. Such a punishment
is visited on the offender or on his near relatives. As a
[784] consequence certain taboos are attached to the shrines and no
[841] menstruating or pregnant woman may come within six yards
[843] of the shrine, nor should anyone enter it without taking
a bath.

796 The actual worship or *puja* is conducted either once or
782 twice a year. The priest cooks rice in milk and adds
pieces of ripe plantain to it, with a few flowering heads of
the sacred *tulsi* plant dropped in towards the end. The
offering is cooked on a special oven near the *sarpa kavu*
in a bell-metal vessel. Thereafter, the priest pours some water
over the snake idols to ceremonially bathe them and places a
bunch of areca-nut palm in efflorescence on the head of the
image in a diagonal fashion. The idol is then anointed with
turmeric powder and basil leaves and flower petals are

showered on it, and it is often garlanded. Incantations and 796 782
mantras are recited by the priest during the ceremony.

Bell-metal oil lamps are lit in front of the images and their [354]
number is usually 3, 5 or 7. In each lamp there are 5 to 7 [801]
wicks pointing in different directions. Only coco-nut oil or
ghee is used in these ceremonial lamps. In front of these
lamps are placed three banana leaves with the cut end of the
leaf facing the image and the tip pointing away from it, facing
north or east. On one of the leaves some uncooked rice is
placed and a husked coco-nut is kept over it, while in the other
leaf unhusked paddy is heaped with a coco-nut placed on it. The
eyes of the coco-nut are away from the snake idol and are towards
the tip of the banana leaf. On the third leaf are placed a few
small bananas of a special variety called *kadali*, because
kadali is referred to in the Vedas.

The boiled rice offering is then placed near the shrine and
some money is offered to the idol by dropping it in the oil of the
lamp. These preparations are offered to the snake god who is
supposed to partake of them. Thereafter the *prasad* or the
offering is distributed among the members of the family,
and the priest gets half of it. The *prasad* must not be eaten [825]
by a crow or dog as this is a bad omen. After the worship, the [787]
contents of the leaves are given to the priest who therefore
takes great pains to see that this particular ceremony is well
conducted.

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Once a month or once every three months, low caste Hindus 796
called Pulluvans visit the houses which have snake shrines. 564
Usually they come on Tuesdays or Fridays, and they sing songs [533]
in praise of the snake gods. This is done in a rather crude [534]
manner to the accompaniment of crude single-stringed instruments called *veena kunju*. For this invocation, an oil lamp
is lit before the shrine, and the above-mentioned three banana
leaves and their respective contents are placed before the image
of the serpent. Usually a woman accompanies the male singer
and joins in the chorus, playing the while upon a crude drum.
After the praise has been adequately rendered, the ceremony is
brought to a close and the musician gets his share of money
and materials. This ceremony is meant to propitiate and

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796 [564] please the serpent god and to flatter him so that he may bear the welfare of the host in mind, and guard the family against disease, misfortune and harm accruing from human or supernatural agencies.

There are three important ceremonies in connection with serpent worship called *sarpa yaga*, *sarpa tulal* and *sarpa preeti*. They are conducted either at home or in the temple, usually on Sundays, since it is held that the serpents are most powerful and lenient on that day and are in a benign mood for granting favours.

[791] *Sarpa preeti* is conducted in the house whenever misfortune occurs. The astrologer is consulted who decrees that a curse is upon the house and the serpents are angry. Thereupon elaborate worship is conducted with much ritual, and propitiation of the angered deities is effected and normalcy returns.

796 755 *Sarpa tulal* is a form of divine cure of the afflicted. The unfortunate victims of leprosy, mental or other diseases gather to worship the serpent gods praying for a cure. The priest conducts the worship and the afflicted go into a trance-like state and dance in religious fervour. Thereafter the priest throws consecrated turmeric powder on their heads and faces. The devotee feels blessed and cures are believed to occur.

796 *Sarpa yaga* is an annual festival in which many families jointly contribute to hold the ceremony. It is held usually for the collective prosperity of the village and lasts for two or three days. The afflicted and diseased persons dance in a trance for a long time and are given coco-nut water by the priest. At the end of the *puja* the priest sprinkles turmeric powder over the heads of the devotees and pours out holy water thrice in the palm of their hands.

825 753 776 One of the special attributes of snakes is their power over disease. The snake deities are specifically importuned for the prevention of skin diseases, stomach disorders, mental disturbances and for sterility. Leucoderma and leprosy are specially regarded as due to the curse of snakes who might have been angered by some unwitting disrespect shown towards them, or by accidental misdemeanour
800 on the part of the inadvertant devotee. Of particular impor-

585 arecanuts and tobacco, to be given to the bride's household,
564 and which are distributed to the guests. When the
613 bride's house is far away the bridegroom makes his procession
thither from a neighbouring house. Arrived at
[276] the bride's house they sit a while and are again served
with food, after which they are conducted to a room
where betel and other chewing stuff is placed on brass
or silver plates (called thâlam). The chewing over,
sweetmeats are served, and then all go to the bridal
chamber, where the women of the house and others are
assembled with the bride, who, overcome with shyness,
hides herself behind the others. Here again the bridegroom
and his party go through more chewing while
they chat with the women. After a while the men withdraw,
wishing the couple all happiness; and then the
women, departing one by one leave the couple alone, one
of them shutting the door from the outside.

[431] "The Patter Brâhmans always collect on these occasions
and receive small presents (dakshina) of 2 to 4 annas
each, with betel leaf and areca nut from the bridegroom,
sometimes from the bride. A few who are invited
receive their dakshina in the bridal chamber; the others
[513] outside. [In a Nâyar house the sleeping rooms of the
men and women are separate; at different ends of the
[574] house.] Those of the bridegroom's party who live far
away are given sleeping accommodation at the bride's
house, with the men. About daybreak next morning the
bridegroom leaves the house with his party, leaving
under his pillow Rs. 8, 16, 32 or 64, according to his means
but never more than 64, which are intended to cover the
expenses of the wife's household on the ceremony. The
Sambandham is now complete. The girl remains in her
own Taravâd house, and her husband visits her there,
585 coming in the evening and leaving the next morning. A
564 few days after completion of the ceremony the senior
woman of the bridegroom's house sends some cloths,
613 including pavu mundu (superior cloths) and thorthu
602 mundu (towels) and some oil to the bride for her use for
[431] six months. Every six months she does the same, and
on festivals of the Ônam, Vishu, Thiruvathira she sends
[796] besides a little money, areca nut, betel nut and tobacco.
The money sent should amount to Rs. 4, or 8, or 16, or 32,
or 64; either one of these sums. Sums of the higher
numbers are very rarely sent.

"Before long the women of the husband's house
express a longing for the girl-wife to be brought to
their house, for they have not seen her yet. Again the

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the Nâyar would be cut down instantly with a sword: 564
there would be no words. Now that the people of India 783
are inconvenienced with an Arms Act which inhibits [656]
sword play of this kind, and with a law-system under
which high and low are rated alike, the Nâyar has to [178]
content himself with an imperious grunt-like shout for [201]
the way to be cleared for him as he stalks on unperturbed. His arrogance is not diminished, but he cannot now show it in quite the same way.

Doubtless the natural habit of seclusion common to 771
Malabar, rendered easy by the wealth of vegetation of which those who have never visited shores somewhat alike climatically can have no conception, has favoured the persistence of earlier forms of belief; but, whatever may be the reason for it, there is much more of the extremes of religious belief to be seen amongst the Nâyars than amongst any other people or caste of Southern India.

It has been noticed already how that the Malayalis [795]
have, practically, no sects such as obtain throughout the rest of Southern India. Vishnu, Siva, Bhagavati, Rama—all these names of the Hindu theogony are meaningless to them. They do not know one from the other except in name. Their Hinduism is not that of the rest of Southern India.

It is time to come to concrete example, so I will 796
attempt a description of the ceremonial observed at the [773]
Pishâri kâvu—the Pishâri temple near Quilandy on the coast 15 miles north of Calicut, where Bhagavati is supposed in vague legend to have slain an Asura or gigantic ogre, in commemoration of which event the festival is held yearly to Bhagavati and her followers.
It is fairly representative. The deity of the temple [776]
Bhagavati is spoken of as feminine in the spirit of accuracy, but it is extremely unlikely whether ten per cent. of the crowd even thought of sex in connection with
Bhagavati. Sacrifice of goats as part of the ceremonial [782]
was at first denied: it is a mystery too awful to be the subject of conversation. At the same time, I am inclined to think that much the weighter reason is that the priests who cling to this part of the ceremonial are ashamed to let it be known to the people that they do it. They like it to be thought that such sacrifice is appropriate to the inferior races, but that *they* are above it and have nothing to do with it!

The festival lasts for seven days. When I visited it in 1895 the last day was on the 31st of March. Before

796 Before
[793] day-break of the first day the ordinary temple priests, a
Mûssad, will leave the temple after having swept up
and made it clean; and (before day-break also) five
Nambûtiris will enter it, bearing with them "Sudhi
796 Kalasam." The Kalasam is on this occasion made of the
778 five products of the cow, *i.e.* (panchagavyam) together
[237] with some water, a few leaves of the banyan tree (Arayâl)
and Darbha grass, all in one vessel. Before being
brought to the temple, mantrams or magic verses will
[783] have been said over it. The contents of the vessel are
sprinkled all about the temple, and a little is put in the
well, thus purifying the temple and the well. The
Nambûtiris will then perform the usual morning worship,
and either immediately after it or very soon afterwards
they leave the temple, and the Mûssad, the ordinary
[613] priest, returns and resumes his office. The temple belongs
to four Taravâds, and no sooner has it been purified than
the Kâranavans of these four Taravâds, virtually the
joint-owners of the temple (known as Urâlas) present to
the temple servant (known as a Pishârodi) the silver flag
of the temple which has been in the custody of one of
them since the last festival. The Pishârodi receives it
and hoists it in front of the temple (to the east), thus
signifying that the festival has begun. While this is
being done, emphasis and grandeur is given to the occasion
[201] by the firing off of miniature mortars such as are
common at all South Indian festivals; and, after the
[411] flag is hoisted, there are hoisted all round the temple
small flags of coloured cloth. For the next few days
[788] there is nothing particular to be done beyond the procession
morning, noon and night; the image of Bhagavati
being carried on an elephant to an orchestra of
drums, and cannonade of the little mortars. All those
who are present are supposed to be fed from the temple.
796 There is a large crowd. On the morning of the fifth day
564 a man of the washerman (he is also a tailor: Vannân)
caste will announce to the neighbours by beat of tom-tom
that there will be made a procession of Bhagavati issuing
[202] from the gates of the temple and passing round about.
Like all those who are in any way connected with the
[788] temple, this man's office is hereditary and he lives to a
small extent on the bounty of the temple, *i.e.*, he holds a
[425] little land on nominal terms from the temple property, in
consideration for which he must fulfil certain requirements
for the temple as on occasions of festivals. His
office also invests him with certain rights in the community.
The Vannân has, I believe, immense power

indirectly, in the matter of giving or not giving new 796
cloths to women after menstruation, but my information 564
on the point is incomplete. Each receives from the
temple daily during the festival a fixed quantity of rice,
and their families are fed. Thus the tailor, the goldsmith, [294]
and the blacksmith, are under obligation to work
as it may be required for the temple without remuneration [326]
in the ordinary way of labour, but for the honour only.

In the afternoon of the same day (the fifth) the Vannân
and a Manûtan, the one following the other and not together,
bring two umbrellas to the temple ; Vannân bringing [293]
one of cloth, the other one of cadjan. I am not sure
whether the cloth umbrella has been in possession of the
Vannân, but think it has. At all events, when he now
brings it to the temple it is in thorough repair, a condition
for which he is responsible. The cadjan umbrella is
a new one. Following these two as they walk solemnly,
each with his umbrella, is a large crowd. There are the
usual processions of Bhagavati on the elephant, encircling
the temple thrice in the morning, at noon and at
night. Nothing more is done on this day.

Early on the sixth day the headman of the Mukkuvans 796
(fisherman), who by virtue of his headship is called the
'Arayân,' together with the blacksmith and the goldsmith 326
comes to the temple followed by an interested crowd, 226
but accompanied by no orchestra of drums. To the 564
Arayân is given half a sack of rice for himself and his
followers, a silver umbrella belonging to the temple is
handed over to him to be used when he comes to the
temple again in the evening. To the blacksmith is given
the temple sword. The goldsmith receives the silver
umbrella from the Arayân, and excutes on it any repairs
that may be needful ; and in like manner the blacksmith
looks to the sword.

In the afternoon the headman of the Tiyans called 796
the "Tandân," comes to the temple followed by two of 564
his castemen carrying slung on a pole over their shoulders
three bunches of young cocoanuts, an appropriate [782]
offering, the Tiyans being those whose ordinary profession
is climbing the cocoanut palm, drawing the toddy, [482]
securing the cocoanuts, etc. This time there will be loud
drumming and a large crowd with the Tandân, and
in front of him are men dancing about, imitating sword
play with sticks and shields, clanging the shields, pulling
at bows as if firing off imaginary arrows, the while
shouting and yelling *madly*. The sticks represent swords. [326]
Then come the blackmith and the goldsmith with the

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564 sword. The goldsmith has some responsibility connected [326] with the sword, perhaps on account of its ornamentation, although the ordinary Malayali blacksmith is quite equal to the ordinary work of a goldsmith as well as repairing clocks and watches. Following comes the Arayân with the silver umbrella to an accompaniment of very noisy drumming; he and his umbrella in great state under a canopy of red cloth held lengthways by two men, one before, one behind. The procession of Bhagavati continues throughout the night, and ceases at day-break. These six days of the festival are called Vilakku.

796 534 A word about the drumming. The number of instrumentalists increases as the festival goes on, and on the last day I counted over fifty, all Nâyars. The instruments were the ordinary tom-tom, a skin stretched tight over one side of a circular wooden band, about 1½ feet in diameter and 2 or 3 inches in width, and the common long drum much narrower at the ends than in the middle, and there were (I think) a few of those narrow in the middle, something like an hour-glass cut short at both ends. They are beaten with drum-sticks, curved, not straight, thicker at the end held in the hand. The [533] accuracy with which they were played on, never a wrong stroke, was truly amazing, although the rhythm was being changed perpetually; and their crescendo and diminuendo, from a perfect fury of wildness to the gentlest pianissimo, was equally astonishing, especially when we consider the fact that there was no visible leader of this strange orchestra.

Early on the seventh and last day, when the morning procession is over, there comes to the temple a man of the Pânan* caste. He carries a small cadjan umbrella which he has made himself, adorned all round the edges with a fringe of the young leaves of the cocoanut palm. His approach is heralded and noised just as in the case of the others on the previous day. The umbrella he brings should have a long handle and with this umbrella in his hand he performs a dance before the temple. The [293] Malabar umbrella has a very long handle as a rule, in fact the correct way to carry an umbrella is with the end of the handle resting in the hand while the arm is straight at the side.

[346] The temple which is figured in the plate[1] is situated within a hollow square enclosure, which none in caste

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* Pânan, a caste numerically small, and inferior. They make umbrellas of cadjan and perform at temples.

[1] [See plate XII, facing p. 252, Category 116--Analyst]

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below the Nâyar is permitted to enter. To the north, 564
south, east, and west, there is a level entrance into this [346]
hollow square, and beyond this entrance no man of
inferior caste may go. The Pânan receives a certain
quantity, about 10 lb. of raw rice for his performance.

In the afternoon a small crowd of Vettuvars come to [411]
the temple carrying with them swords, not very dangerous
ones, and about ten small baskets made of cocoanut palm [263]
leaves, containing salt.* These baskets are carried
slung on a pole as before. These men dance and shout [482]
in much excitement, cutting their heads with their own [786]
swords in their frenzy. Some of them represent devils
or some kind of inferior evil spirits, and dance madly, under the influence of these spirits which they represent. Then comes the Arayân as on the previous day with his little procession, and lastly comes the blacksmith with the sword.

It is explained by the Malayalis that the individuals [294]
of the various castes who hold the office of tailor, gold-
smith and so on to the temple, do so, not for the sake of [326]
what they receive from the temple but in order to mark their position of superiority in their caste. The ceremonial allotted to each also no doubt marks his position in the ladder of caste.

The procession in the evening of this the seventh and 796
last day is a great affair. Eight elephants which kept [231]
line beautifully, took part in this when I witnessed it.
One of them very handsomely caparisoned had on its
back a priest (Mûssad) carrying a sword smothered in [778]
garlands of red flowers representing the goddess. Up to
this time, when she is represented by a sword, it will be remembered she has been represented by an image. The elephant bearing the priest with the sword is bedizened on the forehead with two golden discs, one on each side of the forehead, and over the centre of the forehead hangs a long golden ornament.† He bears other jewels, and over his back is a large canopy-like red cloth richly
wrought. Before the elephant walked a Nâyar carrying [411]
in his right hand in front of him a sword of the kind

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* The use of salt here is obscure as to the purpose. I remember a case [685]
of a Nâyar's house having been plundered, the idol was knocked down and [578]
salt was put in the place where it should have stood. The act was looked on as most insulting.

† The discs on the elephant's forehead are common in Malabar in affairs of ceremony. The Mappila poets are very fond of comparing a beautiful girl's breast to these cup-like discs.

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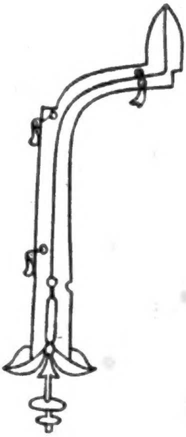
411 called nândakam smeared with white (probably sandalwood) paste. The shape of this sword is given in the illustration. To its edge, at intervals of a few inches, are fastened tiny bells, so that, when it is shaken, there is a general jingle.



796 564 But just before the procession begins there is something for the Tîyans to do. Four men of this caste, having with them Pûkkalasams (flower-kalasams) and five having with them Jannakalasams (?) run along the west, north, and east, sides of the temple (outside the enclosure) shouting and making a noise more like the barking of dogs than anything else. The kalasams contain arrack which [273] is presently given to the temple to be used in the ceremonies. Members of certain families [465 only are allowed to perform in this business, and for what they do each man receives five edangâlis of rice from the temple and a small piece of the flesh of the goat to be [264 sacrificed later. These nine men eat only once a day during the festival; they do no work, remaining quietly [834 at home unless when at the temple; they cannot approach any one of caste lower than their own; they cannot [84 cohabit with women; and they cannot see a women in menstruation during these days. A crowd of Tîyans join more or less in this, rushing about and barking like dogs, making a hideous noise. They too have kalasams, and, when they are tired of rushing and barking, they drink the arrack in them. These men are always under vow. [78 In doing what they do, they fulfil their vow for the benefit they have already received from the goddess—cure from 796 5 sickness as a rule. To the west of the temple is a circular pit—it was called the fire-pit, but there was no fire in it—and this pit all the Tîyan women of the neighbourhood circumambulate, passing from west round by north, three times, holding on the head a pewter plate on which are a little rice, bits of plantain leaves and cocoanut, and a burning wick. As each women completes her third round, she stands for a moment at the western side, facing east, and throws the contents of the plate into the

pit, then goes to the western gate of the enclosure, and 796
puts down her plate for an instant while she makes 564
profound salaam to the goddess ere going away.

And now the procession starts out from the temple, 796
issuing from the northern gate, and for a moment con- 776
fronts a being so strange that he demands description. 536
Of the many familiar demons of the Malayalis the two most intimate are "Kuttichchâttan" and "Gulikan," who are supposed to have assisted Kâli (who is scarcely the Kâli of Brâhmanism by the by) in overcoming the Asura, and on the occasion of this festival these two demons dance before her. "Gulikan" is represented by the Vannân and "Kuttichchâttan" by the Manûtan who have been mentioned already, and who are under like restrictions with the nine Tîyans. I saw poor "Gulikan" being made up, the operation occupying five or six hours or more before his appearance. I asked who he was and was told he was "a devil." He looked mild enough; but then his "make up" had just begun. He was lying flat on the ground close by the northern entrance of the enclosure, where presently he was to dance, a man painting his face to make it hideous and frightful. This done, his hair was dressed; large bangles were put on his arms, covering them almost completely from the shoulder to the wrist; his head and neck was swathed and decorated; a wooden platform arrangement from which hung a red ornamented skirt was fastened to his hips; there was fastened to his back an elongated Prince of Wales's feathers arrangement (made of plank) the top of which reached five feet above his head; and he was made to look like nothing human. Kuttichchâttan was treated in much the same manner.

As the procession issues from the northern gate of the temple where it is joined by the elephants, Gulikan stands in the northern entrance of the enclosure (which he cannot enter), facing it, and a halt is made for three minutes, while Gulikan dances. The poor old man who represented this fearful being, grotesquely terrible in his wonderful metamorphosis, must have been extremely glad when his three minutes' dance, preparation for which occupied all the afternoon, was concluded, for the mere weight and uncomfortable arrangement of his paraphernalia must have been extremely exhausting. It was with difficulty that he moved at all, let alone dance.

The procession passes round by east, where, at the entrance of the enclosure, Kuttichchâttan gives his dance,

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776 round by south to the westward, and leaving the enclosure
proceeds to a certain banyan tree under which is a high
raised platform built up with earth and stones. Preced-
796 ing the procession at a distance of 50 yards are the nine
564 men of the Tîyan caste, mentioned already, carrying
kalasams on their heads, and a crowd of women of the
same caste, each one carrying a pewter plate—*larger* than
the plates used when encircling the fire pit—on which are
rice, etc., and the burning wick as before. The plate and
its contents on this occasion as well as before is called tala-
pôli. I could not make out that anything in particular is
done at the banyan tree, and the procession soon returns to
the temple, the nine men and the Tîyan women following,
[782] carrying their kalasams and talapôli. On the way,
a number of cocks are given in sacrifice by people under
a vow. In the procession are a number of "devil
dancers" garlanded with white flowers of the pagoda tree
mixed with red, jumping, gesticulating, shouting, in an
avenue of the crowd in front of the elephant bearing the
sword. The person under a vow holds the cock towards
one of these "devil dancers" who (never ceasing his
gyrations, mad-like gestures and contortions), presently
seizes its head, wrings it off, and flings it high in the air.
[755] The vows which are fulfilled by this rude decapitation of
cocks have been made in order to bring about cure for
some ailment.

The procession passes through the temple yard, the enclosure, from west to east, and proceeds half a mile to a banyan tree under which, like the other, there is a high raised platform. When passing by the temple, the Tîyan women empty the contents of their plates in the fire pit as before, and the nine men hand over the arrack in their kalasams to the temple servants. Let us note here as we go along the curious distribution of this rice which is heaped in the fire pit. Two-thirds of it go to the four Tîyans carrying the Pû (flower) kalasams and one-third to the five who carried the Jannakalasams. Returning to the procession, we find it at the raised platform to the east of the temple. On this platform have been placed already an ordinary bamboo quart-like measure of paddy, and one of rice, each covered with a plantain leaf. The principal devil dancer takes a handful of rice and paddy and flings it all around. The procession then visits in turn the gates of the gardens of the four owners of the temple. At each is the measure of rice and the measure of paddy covered with plaintain leaves as before, beside them

a small lamp or burning wick, and the devil dancer throws 796 564
a handful towards the house. It then finds its way to the
tree to the west under which, on the platform, is now a
measure of paddy and a lamp; some Brâhmans* repeat
mantrams and the elephant, the priest on his back and
the sword in his hand, all three, are supposed to tremble
violently. Up to this time the procession has moved
leisurely, a very slow march. Now, starting suddenly, it
proceeds at a run to the temple where the priest descends
quickly from the elephant and is taken inside the temple
by the Mûssad priests. He who has been carrying the
sword all this time places it on the sill of the door of the
room in which it is kept for worship, and prostrates
before it. The sword then shakes itself for 15 minutes!
until the chief priest stays its agitation by sprinkling on [778]
it some tirtam, fluid made sacred by having been used for
anointing the image of the goddess. This done, the
chief amongst the devil dancers will with much internal
tumult as well as outward convolutions say, in the way
of oracle, whether the Dêvi has been pleased with the
festival in her honour, or not. As he pronounces this
oracular utterance he falls in a sort of swoon, and every
soul, excepting only the priests and the temple servants,
leaves the place as quickly as possible. The sheds which 796
have been erected for temporary habitation around the
temple will be quickly demolished, and search will be 782
made round about to make sure that no one remains near 564
while the mystic rite of sacrifice is about to be done.
When the whole place has been cleared, the four owners
of the temple, the senior members of the Taravâds who
stand in the position of owners and who, by the way,
have stayed, hand over each a goat with a rope tied
round its neck to the chief priest; and as soon as they
have done so they too depart. There will remain now [793]
in the temple three Mûssads, one drummer (Marayar)
and two temple servants: no others. These Mûssads are [534]
commonly called Brâhmans though the Nambûtiris do
not admit them to be such. The reason for all this
secrecy seems to lie in objection to let it be known
generally that any sacrifice is done. I was told again
and again that there was no such thing. It is a mystic
secret. The Mûssad priests repeat mantrams over the [789]
goats for an hour as a preliminary to the sacrifice. Then [793]

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* East Coast Brahmans (Pattar) I think: perhaps Mûssads.

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564 the chief priest dons a red silk cloth and takes in his
hand a chopper-like sword in shape something like a
782 a small bill-hook—while the goats are taken to a certain
793 room within the temple. This room is rather a passage than a room as there are to it but two walls, running north and south. The goats are made to stand in turn in the middle of this room, facing to the south; the chief priest stand to the east of a goat facing west as he cuts off its head with the chopper. He never ceases his mantrams and the goats never flinch,—the effect of the mantrams! Several cocks are then sacrificed in the same place, and over the carcasses of goats and cocks there is sprinkled charcoal powder mixed in water (karutta gurusi) and saffron powder and lime water (chukanna gurusi), the flow of mantrams never ceasing the while. The three Mûssads only see the sacrifice, a part of the rite supremely secret. Equally so is that which follows. The carcass of one goat will be taken out of the temple
[534] by the northern door to the north side of the temple; and from this place one of the temple servants, *who is blindfolded*, drags it three times round the temple, the Mûssads following closely repeating their mantrams, the drummer in front beating his drum softly with his fingers. The drummer dare not look behind him and does not know what is being done. After the third round the drummer and the temple servant go away and the three Mûssads cook some of the flesh of the goats and one or two of the cocks (or a part of one) with rice. This rice when cooked is taken to the kâvu (grove), to the north of the temple, and there the Mûssads again ply their mantrams. As
[533] each mantram is ended a handful of saffron powder is flung on the rice, and all the time the drummer who by this time has returned, the only one present with the priests, keeps up an *obligato pianissimo* with his drum, using his fingers: he faces the north and the priests face the south. Presently, having done with the mantrams, the priests run (*not walk*) once round the temple carrying the cooked rice and scattering it wide as they go, repeating their mantrams. They enter the temple and remain within until day-break. No one can leave the temple until morning comes. Before daybreak the temple is thoroughly swept and cleaned, and then the Mûssads go out and the five Nambûtiris again enter before sunrise and perform the ordinary worship thrice in the day. For this one day only. The next morning the Mûssad priests return and resume their duties.

Men and women who have taken part in the festival 796
are considered to have undergone spiritual purification 564
each in his or her own caste, and to have marked their [554]
position in it as well as in the social scale. [583]

Beyond noting that the weirdness of the human [541]
tumult busy in its religious effusion is on the last night enhanced by fireworks, mere description of the scene of the festival will not be attempted, and such charming adjuncts of it as the gallery of pretty Nâyar women looking on from the garden fence at the seething procession in the lane below must be left to the imagination for the present, while we must be content with such accuracy as we may attain on all points: neither fancy nor beauty shall allure us from the dull path of precision, for the mere features of the ceremonial are one real concern.

It will have been noticed that the Nambûtiris hold aloof from the festival: they purify the temple before and after, but no more.

The importance attached to the various offices of those 794
who are attached to the temple by however slender a 578
thread, was illustrated by a rather amusing squabble
between two of the Mukkuvans (fishermen), an uncle and 564
nephew, as to which of them should receive the silver umbrella from the temple and bear it to the house of the goldsmith to be repaired. How the squabble arose, how indeed there could have arisen a squabble on such a point as seniority between an uncle and a nephew amongst Mukkuvans, whose descent is reckoned from father to son, I know not, but during the festival one of them made a rapid journey to the Zamorin (about 50 miles distant), paid some fees and established himself as the senior who
had the right to carry the umbrella. There are points 796
of resemblance between this festival and the village [171]
festival of Southern India where the buffalo "devoted" to the goddess of the village is sacrificed, where there is the slaughter of the lamb by the strong teeth of a man, the dressing up in leaves, the man naked and blindfolded going round outside the village while cooked rice and blood are scattered wide, the blindfolded man falling senseless before the goddess at the end of it.*

There are many festivals in Malabar description of 796
which would be very interesting, but information in 114
detail is wanting in my notes, so I must perforce rest content with what has been related of the festival at the

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* Described at length by me in the "Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay" some eight years ago.

796 Pishâri Kâvu which represents one of moderate im-
114 portance and truly one of the people, and its narration
is fairly complete. It seems to express the religion of
the Nâyars as it is when not tacked on to that of the
Brâhmans: as they formulate it of themselves entirely in
their own way.

An important local festival is that held near Palghat,
796 in November, in the little suburb Kalpâti inhabited
184 entirely by Pattar Brâhmans from the east; but it is not
a true Malayali festival and it suffices to mention its
existence for it in no way represents the religion of the
Nâyar. The dragging of cars on which are placed the
images of deities, common everywhere from the temple of
Jagganath, at Pûri in Orrisa, to Cape Comorin, is quite
unknown in Malabar excepting only at Kalpâti which is
close to the eastern frontier of Malabar. The Kalpâti
782 festival is the only "car festival" in Malabar.

[131] Near Chowghât (Chavagât), about 30 miles to the
southward of Calicut, on the backwater, an arm of the
[346] sea and separated from it by a thin strip of land between
the rivers, at a place called Guruvayûr, is a very im-
portant temple the property of the Zamorin, yielding a
very handsome revenue. I visited this festival on one
occasion and saw there much which was of interest but
which must find place in the account of regions of others
[126] than Nâyars. Here purchase was made of a few offer-
ings such as are made to the temple in satisfaction of
[532] vows. A very rude representation of an infant in silver,
a hand, a leg, an ulcer, a pair of eyes, and, most curious
of all, a silver string which represents a man—the giver.
Symbolization of the offering of self is made by a silver
[326] string as long as the giver is tall! Goldsmiths working
in silver and gold are to be seen just outside the gate of
the temple ready to provide at a moment's notice the
object any person intends to offer, in case he is not
already in possession of his votive offering.

The subject of vows can be touched on but incidentally here.* A vow is made by one desiring offspring, to have his hand or leg cured, to have an ulcer cured, to fulfil any desire whatsoever, and he decides in solemn affirmation to himself (it is not necessary to go to a temple for the purpose of vowing) to give a silver image of a child, a silver

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[113] * The subject of vows generally, including description of a Roman Catholic shrine at Cochin somewhat akin to that at Guravayûr, was treated by me in an article which appeared in the 'Calcutta Review' for January 1899.

leg, and so on, in the event of his having fulfilment of his 782
desire. The offering is never an adjunct of the prayers;
it is always something done for benefit received. The
thing to be noted is that a vow is *always* fulfilled; fulfilled
as well as the vower can possibly fulfil it; it is never
forgotten or overlooked.

> " When the devil was sick the devil a saint would be
> " When the devil was well the devil a saint was he "

is a couplet inapplicable to the Nâyar, or, indeed, to any people in Southern India, where vows, of objects to be given or animals to be sacrified, are treated always with the utmost sacredness even by people who perhaps in no relation of life behave for an hour with common honesty.

A true Malayali festival is that held at Kottiôr, in 796
North Malabar, in the forest at the foot of the Wynâd
hills rising 3,000 to 5,000 feet from the sides of the little
glade where it is situated. It is held in July during the
height of the monsoon rain. The average rainfall at [132]
Kottiôr in July is probably 60 inches at least, so the
devotees generally get a good ducking. Though it is a
festival for high and low these do not mix at Kottiôr. The [564]
Nâyars go first, and after a few days, the Nâyars having
done, the Tîyans, and so on. A curious feature of it is
that people going to attend it are distinctly rowdy, feeling
they have a right to abuse in the vilest and filthiest terms
everyone they see on the way—perhaps a few days'
march; and not only do they abuse to their hearts'
content in their exhuberant excitement, but they use personal
violence to person and property all along the road.
They return like lambs.

I have not been able to ascertain with that definiteness 796
which would enable me to offer more than an opinion, the 782
connection between this violence of language and physical
force against innocent people who are met *en route*, and
the object of worship at Kottiôr, so will leave that part of
the subject alone. The other day I visited the Gangamma [778]
festival at sacred Tirupati in North Arcot, and observed,
together with conduct the most truly religious vows being
carried out with the strongest disregard to personal
comfort, the use of language truly filthy and obscene
towards the goddess herself! " Gangamma! You have a——
(using a filthy word for the vagina) as big as a basket."
"She is a whore " said another; and each one in the little
crowd of votaries, evidently from the same village, as
they approached the shrine, tried to out-do the other in
insult and vituperation of the goddess to whom they had

796 come to pay their vows for some good done them by her.
782 Obscenities which need not be described were done—these
chiefly by people of very low caste let it be said—by
people who felt that neither gesture in the dance nor
word could be gross enough to express the violence of
their feelings. Yet these people, men and women, rolled,
or were rolled, for they soon become unconscious, many
times round the temple, their arms stretched towards it,
their hair, their clothes (scanty enough) and persons
generally thick with the dust. A piteous sight. And
796 there were to be seen men carrying over their heads an
782 ornamented wooden canopy, the whole (and no light
785 weight) held up, fastened to the person by the ends of the
supports of the canopy, being stuck through the skin of
the back and of the chest. Nothing resting on the
shoulders or held in the hand. I saw a man who, to fulfil
a vow to this goddess who was abused so vilely, had done
this every year for over twenty years, and this year
handed on performance of the painful vow to his son, a
growing lad. The bearers of these canopies danced
continuously as if trying to make the points in their flesh
as hurtful as possible. So that, together with vituperation
of the goddess, there was much veneration, and there is no
hesitation in expressing this through bodily discomfort
and pain.

796 Content for the present with this example from another
part of the Presidency, we will return now to Kottiôr
[346] which I visited in November 1894. One sees a temple of
Isvara, there called Perumâl (or Perumâl Iswara) by the
people; a low thatched building forming a hollow square,
in the centre of which was the shrine which, I was not
[793] permitted to see. There were some Nambûtiri priests who
came out and entered into conversation. Their life far
away in the forest must be a lonely one. The refreshment which they offered, butter-milk and sugar, was
[574] accepted thankfully. The Nambûtiris, very unsophisticated persons and much wrapped up in their personal
sanctity, placed the milk and sugar on the ground, and
invited us graciously to partake. A large piece of
cocoanut which they threw to my dog was, strange to say,
eaten greedily by the beast.

796 The festival is not held at the temple but in the forest
778 about quarter of a mile distant. This spot is deemed
extremely sacred and dreadful. There was, however, no
objection to myself and my companion visiting it: we
were simply begged not to go. There were with us a

Nâyar and a Kurichchan, and the faces of these men 796
when we proceeded to wade through the little river, knee- 778
deep and about 30 yards wide, in order to reach the sacred spot of the festival, expressed anxious wonder. They dared not accompany us across. No one (excepting, of course, a Muhammadan) would go near the place unless during the few days of the festival when it is safe: at all other times any man going to the place is destroyed instantly. How much this belief has to do with Íswara need not be commented on! Nothing on earth would have persuaded either the Nâyar or the Kurichchin to cross that river. Orpheus proceeding to find his Eurydice, Dante about to enter the Inferno had not embarked on so fearful a journey! About a hundred yards beyond the stream we came upon the sacred spot, a little glade in the forest. Why this uncomfortable place was chosen I know not; in the rains when the festival is held it is usually under water, and the people have to stand in water. In the centre of the glade is a circle of piled up stones, 12 feet in diameter. In the middle of the pile of stones is a rude lingam. By the same token the lingam had been broken and displaced a few days previously by some Mâppilas searching for treasure which they thought was there. *Running east from the circle of the lingam is a long shed, in the middle of which is a long raised platform of brick, used apparently as a place for cooking. Around the lingam there were also thatched sheds in which the people had lodged during the festival. Grass and weeds were growing high, and the sheds were dilapidated and looking as if they had not been used for years; but then the rain in Malabar brings about destructive effects with astonishing rapidity.

Pilgrims going to this festival carry with them offerings [782]
of some kind. Tiyans take young cocoanuts. I am not [788]

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* The circle of stones is specially interesting. Near the Angadipuram-Manjery road, between Vellila and the ferry is a monolith in the centre of a piled up platform circled with stones, the circle 30 feet in diameter. Apparently one of the many pre-Hindu remains in Malabar. Description of the ancient remains in Malabar, which are specially interesting, must be made later on. Just now let me note that stone circles are common. And I find in my notes the following: "On the hill side just about the Tirunelli temple (North Wynâd forests), where there is a clearing in the forest and the ground is somewhat flat, is a circle of stones 12 feet in diameter, and filled up with earth so as to make a raised platform nearly 2 feet in height; in the centre a small upright stone 10 inches high. To the north-east, three flat upright stones . . . . and a flat place, rudely square about 11 feet from the circle, evidently an old sacred place of some of the jungle folk."

796 778 sure what the Nâyars take; perhaps the same. Every one who returns brings with him a swish made of split young leaves of the cocoanut palm.

796 788 782 [765] [302] A shrine to which the Malayalis, Nâyars included, resort is that of Subramania in Palni, in the north-west corner of the Madura district, about a week's march from the confines of Malabar near Palghat. Not only are vows paid to this shrine, but men, letting their hair grow for a year after their father's death, proceed to have it cut there. The plate[1] shows an ordinary Palni pilgrim. The arrangement which he is carrying is called a kâvadi. There are two kinds of kâvadi: a milk kâvadi (one containing milk in a pot) and a fish kâvadi (one containing fish). The vow may be made in respect of either, each being appropriate to certain circumstances. When the time comes near for the pilgrim to start for Palni he dresses in reddish orange cloths, shoulders his kâvadi and starts out. Together with a man ringing a bell, and perhaps one with a tom-tom, with ashes on his face, he assumes the role of beggar. The well-to-do are inclined to reduce the beggar period to the minimum; but a beggar every votary must be, and as a beggar he goes to Palni in all humbleness and humiliation, and there he fulfils his vow; leaves his kâvadi and his hair and a small sum of money.

Though the individuals about to be noticed were not Nâyars, their cases illustrate very well the religious idea of the Nâyar as expressed under certain circumstances; for between the Nâyars and these there is in this respect little if any difference. It was at Guruvayûr in November 1895. On a high raised platform under a peepul tree were a number of people under vows, bound for Palni. A boy of 14 had suffered as a child from epilepsy, and seven years ago his father vowed for him (on his behalf) that if he were cured he would make the pilgrimage to Palni. He wore a string of beads round his neck and a like string on his right arm (these were in some way connected with the vow). His head was bent and he sat motionless under his kâvadi, leaning on the bar, which when he carried it rested on his shoulder. He could not go to Palni until it was revealed to him in a dream when he was to start. He had waited for this dream seven years, subsisting on roots (yams, etc.) and milk,—no rice. Now he had had the [776] long-looked-for dream, and he was about to start. As an instance of the Malayali's ignorance of the Hindu theogony, this youth said he was going to the god "Sri Krishnan" in Palni. It is well known that god there is *not* Krishna.

[1] [See Plate XI, facing p. 230, Category 116 -- Analyst]

796 788 785 Another pilgrim was a man wearing an oval band of silver over the lower portion of the forehead almost covering his eyes; his tongue outside his teeth, kept in position by a silver skewer through it. Had been fasting two years. Much under the influence of the god, and whacking incessantly at a drum in delirious excitement. The skewer was put in the day before, and was to be left in for forty days. Several of the pilgrims wore a handkerchief tied over the mouth, they being under a vow of silence. [782] One poor man wore the regular instrument of silence, the mouth-lock (a wide silver band over the mouth, the ends reaching over the cheeks, a skewer through both cheeks keeping the ends together * and, of course, the mouth open); and he sat patiently in a nice tent-like affair, about 3 feet high. People fed him with milk, &c., but he made no effort to procure food, relying merely on what was given him.

796 788 Pilgrims generally go in crowds under charge of a priestly guide, one who, having made a certain number of journeys to the shrine, wears a peculiar sash and other gear. They call themselves pujâris, and are quite *an fait* with all the ceremonial prior to the journey as well as with the exigencies of the road. As I stood there, one of these pujâris stood up amidst the recumbent crowd. He raised his hands towards the temple a little to the west, then spread out his hands as if invoking a blessing on the people around him. Full of religious fervour he was (apparently at any rate) unconscious of all but the spiritual need of his flock.

The use of the mouth-lock is common with the Nâyars when they assume the pilgrims' robes and set out for Palni, and I have often seen many of them garbed and mouth-locked going off on a pilgrimage to that place.

796 184 788 Brief mention must be made of the festival held at Kodungallûr in the northernmost corner of the Cochin State, along the coast, as it possesses some strange features peculiar to Malabar and is much frequented by the Nâyars. Kodungallûr is near Cranganore, the old Dutch Settlement, where was, probably, the Musiris of the Greeks. Tiruvangaikalam, close by, will probably turn out to be the long lost site of the capital of the Chêra kingdom. I have been disappointed in obtaining particulars

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* The mouth-lock is not peculiar to Malabar. A description of this form of vow in another part of the Presidency was made by me in the "Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay," Vol. II, No. 2 (1890). [171] [113]

796 of the festival, so make the following excerpt from
184 Mr. Logan's well-known "Manual of Malabar." "It takes
788 the people in great crowds from their homes. The whole country near the lines of march rings with the shouts 'Nada-a Nada-a' of the pilgrims to the favourite shrines, chief of which is that at Cranganore (Kodungallûr) in the Native State of Cochin. Of what takes place when the pilgrims reach this spot perhaps the less said the better. In their passage up to the shrine the cry of 'Nada-a Nada-a' (march, march away) is varied by terms of unmeasured abuse levelled at the goddess (a Bhagavati) of the shrine. This abusive language is supposed to be acceptable to her. On arrival at the shrine they desecrate it in every conceivable way, believing that this too is acceptable; they throw stones and filth, howling volleys of opprobrium at her house. The chief of the fisherman
[564] caste, styled *Kûli Muttatta Arayan*, has the privilege of being the first to begin the work of polluting the *Bhoot*
[782] or shrine. Into other particulars it is unnecessary to enter; cocks are slaughtered and sacrificed. The worshipper gets flowers only, and no holy water after paying his vows. Instead of water he proceeds outside and drinks arrack or toddy, which an attendant Nâyar serves out. All castes are free to go, including Tîyars and low caste people. The temple was originally only a Bhoot or holy tree with a platform. The image in the temple is said to have been introduced only of recent years." It is a pity Mr. Logan is so reticent. My information is that the headman of the Mukkuvans (fisher caste) opens the festival by solemnly making a fœcal deposit on the image. Here again there is the same strange union of everything that is filthy, abusive, foul and irreverent, with every mode of expressing the deepest religious feeling.

Leaving now the religion, expression of which may be seen at temple festivals and during pilgrimages to these scenes of religious fervour, we will turn to that which we see in the house of the Nâyar at home.

791 Plate XII* shows a man standing with a sword of the shape known as Nândakam. He is an individual called a Velichchappâd, and as he stood to be photographed by me his forehead and face streamed with blood from a self-inflicted wound on the head. The Velichchappâd is a
771 familiar character in Malabar. His profession illustrates the very mixed character of the Hinduism of the Nâyar, partaking as it does of much of the lower cult,—animism,

*[see cat. 116, plate facing p. 242 -- An.]

and deification of ancestors, worship of snakes and kites, 771 ceremonies connected therewith, sacrifice, magic, witchcraft and sorcery—together with the purest form of Vêdic Brâhmanism known in Southern India, of which there is the highest expression in the temples attached to the wealthy Nambûtiri Illams, to which the Nâyar goes daily to pray, to purify his mind after having purified his body by bathing. There is very little to be seen of prayer in 771 Southern India outside Malabar. The great mass of the 771 people (I exclude the Brâhmans, a very minute percentage, of the whole) never dream of going to a temple daily to 782 pray; in fact prayer for its own sake scarcely exists. People go in crowds to a temple on the occasion of a festival to make obeisance to the god, and in a vague way to pray, or they will go to fulfil a vow; but going merely to pray by way of self purification of spirit is certainly rare, for this denotes a phase of religion to which the great mass of the people of Southern India has not reached.

Far away in, as it may be said, rural Malabar, I wit- 796 nessed the ceremony in which the Velichchappâd exhibited his quality. It was in the courtyard of a Nâyar house, to which thronged all the neighbours (Nâyars), men and pretty women, boys and girls. The ceremony lasts about an hour. The Nâyar said it was the custom in his family to have it done once a year, but could give no account of how the custom had originated: most probably in a vow; some ancestor having vowed that if such or such benefit be received, he will for ever after have an annual performance of this ceremony in his house. It involved some [465] expenditure, as the Velichchappâd had to be paid, and the neighbours had to be fed. Somewhere about the [357] middle of the little courtyard, always as clean as a dinner table, the Velichchappâd placed a lamp (of the [354] Malabar pattern) having a lighted wick, a kalasam, which he had prepared, some flowers, camphor, saffron and other paraphernalia. Bhagavati was the deity invoked, and the business involved offering flowers, and waving a lighted wick around the kalasam. The Velichchappâd's move- 787 ments became quicker, and suddenly seizing the sword he ran round the courtyard (*against* the sun, as the sailors 796 say) shouting wildly. He is under the influence of the deity who has been induced into him, and he gives oracular utterance to the deity's commands. What he said I know not, and no one else seemed to know or care in the least, much interested though they were in the

787 performance. As he ran, every now and then he cut his
796 forehead with the strange misshapen sword, pressing it
[785] against the skin and sawing (vertically) up and down. The blood streamed all over his face. Presently he became wilder and wilder, and whizzed round the lamp, bending forward towards the kalasam. Evidently some deity, some spirit, was present here, and spoke through the mouth of the Velichchappâd. This, I think, undoubtedly represents the belief of all who were present. When he had done whizzing round the kalasam, he soon became a normal being and stood before my camera.
[465] The fee for this self-inflicted laceration is one rupee and some odds and ends of rice, etc. I saw the Velichchappâd
791 about three days afterwards going to perform
796 elsewhere. The wound on his forehead had healed! The careful observer can always identify a Velichchappâd by the triangular-like patch over the forehead where the hair will not grow, and where the skin is somewhat indurated. The Velichchappâds seem to get used to cutting their foreheads as the eels to skinning.

We shall find the oracle again when we come to the lower races. I have seen a fine demonstration of it amongst the Paniyans of Wynâd when engaged in a regular corrobboree. An extremely interesting example of this combination of this phase of the lower Dravidian cult which is in no way Hindu, with the Brâhmanic religion, is to be seen at Mailâr in the Bellary district. There the oracle is bound up with a story about Rishis and Asuras, an incarnation of Siva and Pârvati, and many thousands assemble yearly to hear the oracle delivered by a man on the top of a huge affair representing Siva's bow, speaking the words of the god.

769 Before concluding the subject of religion, allusion
782 must be made to the worship of ancestors. Cremation of the dead, as in the case of the Nambûtiris, is done in the garden or compound surrounding the Taravâd house, in the south or south-west corner of it; so the Nâyar has the ashes and spirits of his ancestors with him always. We have seen already how that pacification of the spirits of those who have passed from view, and who are in the land of the shades, pervade the lives of the living. They are worshipped every new moon day, but especially on the new moon of Karkitakam,* of Tulâm and of Kumbham

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[113] * The names of the Malayali months have been given already—see Nambûtiris (Bulletin, Vol. III, No. 2).

776 shape. It is overgrown with trees of various kinds, and shrubs,
778 and sometimes medicinal plants also. In the middle of this
quasi-circular shrine images usually made of laterite after
specified shapes are arranged in certain established methods and
a passage is opened to the seat of these images from outside.
This spot is so scrupulously reserved, that not even domestic
animals are allowed to stray therein. No trees from the place
are to be felled down, nor any plant whatever for that matter
with any metal or more particularly iron weapons; for these
are unholy things, the introduction alone of which inside the
sanctified area, not to say the actual cutting down of the tree, is
[564] regarded as exceedingly distasteful to these serpent gods. They
are not to be desecrated by the touch or even by the approach of
[793] a low-caste man. Once in every year at least poojah offerings
are made to these gods through the medium of the Numbūdri
[782] priests.

"Periodical ceremonies called Pāmbantullel are performed to
796 propitiate them. These are resorted to only on special occasions
776 for the purpose of averting serious visitations from the family.
782 The ceremony is a long complicated process. Any individual
drawn from among the Nairs themselves is capable of acting the
part of priests on these occasions. A day is fixed for the opening
of the ceremony; and a particular plot of ground in the house
yard is cleansed and preserved for the performance of the poojahs
[532] incidental to the ceremony. Then on the spot certain square
figures are drawn, one inside another, and these are tastefully
diversified by the interpolation of circular figures and others
inside and about them, based on geometrical principles. A
peculiar symmetry is observed in the matter of these figures.
The figures used in the drawings are usually of various colours,
red, white, black and others. Ordinary rice-flour, then again
such flour mixed with a combination of chunnam and turmeric
powder, thereby making the flour pure red, and burnt paddy husk
are chiefly employed. Then a number of other accessories are
also required for the ceremony in the shape of lamps, cocoanuts,
eatables of various sorts prepared from paddy and rice and some
other cooked things, such as rice, bread made of rice, and others.
[533] These are properly arranged in the place and poojah is offered
by the priest with the slow recitation of *mantrams*, and some holy
songs or ballads in memory of these gods. Then a number of
Nair women, with perfect purity and cleanliness of person are
seated close to each other in a row or two. These women are to
preserve sanctity and purity of their persons by a total abstinence
from animal food, intoxicants and anything else of an exciting
nature for a prescribed period of time; and it is only after the
lapse of this period that they become worthy of being admitted to

this ceremony. Thus having purged their bodies of all worldliness 796
they are taken into the ceremony and are seated as described 776
before. Now by means of the *mantrams* and poojah the serpent 782
gods are propitiated and in consequence they manifest themselves [787]
in the bodies of these female representatives of theirs. The
entrance of the gods into their bodies is characterised by a fearful 796
concussion of their whole frame, gradually developing into a 776
ceaseless, shaking, particularly the upper parts. A few minutes 782
afterwards, they begin to speak one by one and their speeches are 787
regarded as expressions of the god's will. Sometimes the gods
appear in the bodies of all these females and sometimes only in
those of a select few or none at all. The refusal of the gods to
enter into such persons is symbolical of some want of cleanliness
and purity in them; which contingency is looked upon as a
source of anxiety to the individual. It may also suggest the
displeasure of these gods towards the family in respect of which
the ceremony is performed. In either case, such refusal on the
part of the gods is an index of their ill-will or dissatisfaction.
In cases where the gods refuse to appear in any one of those seated
for the purpose, the ceremony is prolonged until the gods are so
properly propitiated as to constrain them to manifest themselves.
Then after the lapse of the number of days fixed for the ceremony
and after the will of the serpent gods is duly expressed the
ceremonies close.

"One other small item of offering to these gods consists in 776
certain ballads sung by the Pulluvar females going about from
house to house at stated seasons of the year. They take a pretty 533
large pitcher, close its opening by means of a small circular piece 534
of thin leather which is fastened on to the vessel by means of 782
strings strongly tied round its neck. Another string is adjusted
to the leather cover which when played on by means of the fingers,
produces a hoarse note which is said to please the god's ears,
pacify their anger and lull them into sleep. This vessel is carried
from house to house in the day time by these Pulluvar females;
and placing the vessel in a particular position on the ground,
and sitting in a particular fashion in relation to the vessel, they
play on the string which then produces a very pleasing musical
note. Then they sing ballads to the accompaniment of these
notes. After continuing this for sometime they stop, and getting
their customary dues from the family, go their own way. It is
believed that these notes and the ballads are peculiarly pleasing to
the serpent gods, who bless those for whose sakes the music has
been rendered. In consequence of the halo of sanctity that has 766
been popularly thrown round the serpent it is considered a sin of 776
a most heinous nature to kill one of these deified reptiles. The
killing of a cobra is regarded with the utmost concern amongst 825
us. In such case the carcase is taken and duly burned with all [783]

by the big cadjan umbrellas of the female inmates of the 778
Illam. On the third day the door is opened, and whatever 776
remains in the vessel of the dough and milk placed there 782
is thrown into a tank as unfit for human use. The
mixing up of noorum palum and the performing of the
poojahs are done by the eldest female member of the
Illam. The noorum palum is made of rice-flour, saffron
powder, cow's milk, water of the tender cocoanut, fruit of
the Kadali plantain, and ghee. In the Nálukettu of the
house, offerings of noorum palum and cooked rice, as
well as kuruthi (a red liquid composed of flour, saffron
and chunam), take place every Ayilyam (star) day.
Every morning the king and queen of serpents are
washed, and an offering of fruit and milk is made to
them; in the noon offerings of Vellanivedyam (cooked
rice) and afterwards of fried grain (malar) follow. During
the month of Kartika, a special poojah called navakom
and offering of noorum palum are daily observed. On
the Sivarátri day, in the month of Mási, the customary
five poojahs and navakom are performed, and in the
evening of the same day sacrificial offerings to the serpents
and kuruti, as stated above, are made, and at the
conclusion of the day's poojahs the idols are taken in
procession round the temple. On Ayilyam (star) days, 796
in the months of Purattási and Alpasi, all the serpent
idols in the grove and the temples therein are taken in 776
procession to the Illam, and offerings of noorum palum, 776
kuruti and cooked rice are made there in propitiation of 782
the serpent gods. The person who carries the idol of the
Nágarája is the eldest female member of the Illam, and
the procession is conducted with great pomp and rejoicings.
According to my informant, the eldest female
member of the house, though married, is expected to lead
a celibate life when she becomes the oldest female in the
family. During the festive days at Mannārsāla, about
5,000 people assemble to worship and propitiate the
serpent gods, and their offerings include gold and silver
coins, and gold, silver, copper or stone effigies of snakes,
grains of all kinds, pepper, salt, saffron, tender cocoanuts,
bunches of Kadali plantain, melons, oil, ghee, sandalwood,
silk and other pilgrims. On the day previous to
the Ayilyam ceremonial, about two or three thousand
Brahmans are fed. The annual expense of this institution
and worship at Mannārsāla is estimated at about [435]
2,000 rupees. The kâvu has its own paddy fields and
gardens, from the revenues of which it is maintained. [423]

THE ÔNAM FESTIVAL.

796 [431] The popular festival of Malabar is the Ônam, occurring in the last days of August or early in September. It is the great occasion for general rejoicing, when every one gives and receives presents, when the children are to be seen roaming everywhere gathering flowers, to make the flower carpets which are a distinctive feature of this happy season. For the Ônam is not merely a one-day festival. It lasts three days at least, and the ten days preceding it are occupied in preparations and in games—Ônam games. A writer (a Malayali evidently), in the "Calcutta Review" for January 1899, thus describes the Ônam season:—

796 539 "There are a great many of these Ônam ballads; but most of them are of a piece with the specimen given. It is a delight to hear them chanted in the early morning hours by bands of light-hearted children with clear bell-like voices;—

Chembil house maiden, little maiden,
What did he give you who yesterday came?
A new dress he gave me, a small dress he gave me,
A lounge likewise on which to recline,
A tank to disport in, a well to draw water from, a compound
To gambol in, a big field to sing in.
Freshen up flowers, oh freshen for me.
On the south and the north shore, in the compound of Kannan, there grew up and flourished a thumba flower plant.
Out of this plant were fifty boats gotten; at the head of each boat a banyan tree grew.
From the banyan there grew a tiny little babe, and a drum and a stick for the baby to play with.
The drum and the drum-stick, the household domestic, all together they flew away and they vanished.
Freshen up, flowers, oh freshen for me.
A measure and a half measure, and elephant's chains and earrings, who goes under the flower tree beneath which the elephant passes?
It is no one at all, it is no one at all; it is the Kuttikat baby god; when we went forth to pluck of ripe fruit, a mischievous urchin sprang up and bit us.
With bitten foot when we went to the Brahmin's, the Brahmin lady, we found, had been injured.
With bitten foot then we went to the house of Edathil, whose lady with fever lay stricken.
Freshen up, flowers, oh freshen for me.

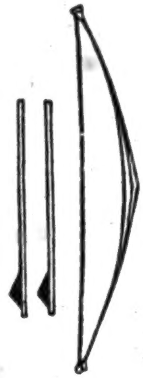
At noon of Attam day a bamboo fresh sprouted, and therewith we made us a good fish trap. 796 539
And when to the tank a fishing we went, we baited a minnow.
By its tail did we hold it, on the *bund* did we dash it, and of cocoanuts, with milk full, eighteen we ground.
With elephant pepper we dressed it; with asafœtida we filled it, right up to the elephant's head.
Freshen up, flowers, oh freshen for me.

Having set out at dawn to gather blossoms, the little children return with their beautiful spoils by 9 or 10 A.M.; and then the daily decorations begin. The chief decoration consists of a carpet made out of the gathered blossoms, the smaller ones being used in their entirety, while the large flowers and one or two varieties of foliage of differing tints are pinched up into little pieces to serve the decorator's purpose. This flower carpet is invariably made in the centre of the clean strip of yard in front of the neat house. Often it is a beautiful work of art accomplished with a delicate touch and a highly artistic sense of tone and blending. Among the flowers that contribute to the exquisite design may be named the common red, as well as the rarer variegated, lantana, the large red shoe flower *(Hibiscus rosa sinensis)* an indispensable feature of the cultivated vegetation in a Malayali's homestead, the yellow marigold, the yellow aster, the scarlet button flower, the sacred *tulsi (Ocimum sanctum)*, the wee, modest *thumber* (a vermifugal member of the Nepetæ tribe), the common *tagara* (yellow wild Cassia), the beautiful bluebell, and another common species of Cassia which the natives call the "Ônam flower." In addition, various little violet and purple wildlings that adorn the margins of rice fields, and beautiful specimens of the lily and allied orders of tropical plants are requisitioned by the weavers of these remarkably handsome, but, alas, quickly perishable, carpets. The carpet completed, a miniature pandal, hung with little festoons, is erected over it, and at all hours of the day neighbours look in, to admire and criticise the beautiful handiwork. This object is peculiar to the naturally well favoured province of Kéralam; and it serves to remind us that the people who possess the refined taste to produce such a pretty work of art must have long enjoyed a very high order of civilisation." 796 824

It has been noticed already under description of Nambûtiri Brahmans (Bulletin, Vol. III, No. 1), that the cloths given as "Ônam presents" are yellow, or some part of them is yellow. There must be at least a yellow stripe or a small patch of yellow in a corner, which suggests a relic of sunworship in a form more pronounced than that which obtains at present. It is a harvest 796 431 796

796 festival, about the time when the first crop of paddy is [132] harvested. As a rule the Ônam season is one of bright sunshine following the almost continuous rain of June, July and August.

526 796 [184] I once witnessed a very interesting game called êitû (êiththu), played by the Nâyars in the Southern portion of Kurumbranâd during the ten days preceding Ônam. Curiously, the locality and the period are, so to speak, fixed. There is a semi-circular stop-butt, about two feet in the highest part, the centre, and sloping to the ground at each side. The players stand 25 to 30 yards before the concave side of it, one side of the players to the right, the other to the left. There is no restriction of numbers as to "sides." Each player is armed with a little bow made of bamboo about 18 inches in length, and arrows or what answer for arrows, these being no more than pieces of the midrib of the cocoanut palm leaf, roughly broken off, leaving a little bit of the leaf at one end to take the place of the feather. In the centre of the stop-butt, on the ground, is placed the target, a piece of the heart of the plantain tree, about 3 inches in diameter, pointed at the top, in which is stuck a small stick convenient for lifting the "cheppu" as the mark which is the immediate objective of the players is called. They shoot indiscriminately at the mark, and he who hits it (the little arrows shoot straight and stick in readily) carries of all the arrows lying on the ground. Each "side" strives to secure all the arrows and to deprive the other side of theirs. A sort of "beggar my neighbour." He who hits the mark *last* takes all the arrows; that is, he who hits it, and runs and touches the mark before any one else hits it. As I stood watching, it happened several times that as many as four arrows hit the mark, while the youth who had hit it first was running the 25 yards to touch the "cheppu." Before he could touch it, as many as four other arrows had struck it; and, of course, he who hit it last and touched the mark secured all the arrows for his side. The game is accompanied by much shouting, gesticulation, and laughter. Those returning after securing a large number of arrows turned somersaults, and in saltatory motions expressed their joy.



In the south-east of Malabar, in the neighbourhood of 796
Palghat, the Ônam games are of a rougher character, the 526
tenants of certain jenmis (landlords) turning out each 184
under their own leader, and engaging in sham fights in
which there is much rough play. Here, too, is to be seen
a kind of boxing which would seem to be a relic of the
days of the Roman pugiles using the cestus in combat.
The position taken up by the combatants is much the
same as that of the pugiles. The Romans were familiar [175]
with Malabar from about 30 B.C. to the decline of their [263]
power. We may safely assume that the "3,000 lbs. of
pepper" which Alarie demanded as part of the ransom [648]
of Rome when he besieged the city in the fifth century,
came from Malabar.*

Before ending this very incomplete account of customs 173
of the Nâyars, mention must be made of two more of 635
these, both odd. Ever since Châraman Perumal departed
from the west coast of India in A.D. 825, setting sail for
Arabia and Mecca, having divided up his kingdom,
His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore when ascending [788]
his throne says: "I ascend the musnud, and will
rule until my uncle returns." The "uncle" is Châraman
Perumal, the last sovereign of the west coast, who,
having embraced the Muhammadan religion which was
brought to his shores by Arab traders, proceeded to
carry out a wild idea—so goes the legend—of receiving
instruction from the Prophet himself! He never
returned. To one princeling was given the territory
now known as Travancore, and his surviving successor
(through the female line of course) is the present
Maharajah of Travancore. To another he gave Cochin; [611]
the ruler of which State also inherits through the
female line. To the ancestor of the Zamorin of Calicut
the Perumal gave no territory, as to the others, but
he gave him his sword (it is still in existence) with the
advice "to die and kill and annex." That he annexed 635
is quite clear, as he was the sovereign not only of
Calicut but of the country round about when modern
Europeans first visited the west coast of India. Like the [788]
Maharajah of Travancore, the Zamorin repeats the
formula that he rules until his uncle returns, but in his
case it forms part of an elaborate and costly ceremony.
The fort, which was the official residence of the Zamorin,

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* See Madras Government Museum Catalogue No. 2, Roman Coins, by Mr. Edgar Thurston, Superintendent of the Museum.

611
therefore one belonging to the community at large—in 562
South Malabar, at any rate. The system of inheritance 182
through females as it obtains amongst the Nâyars, relieves the woman from that undignified position which she occupies throughout the civilized world as the personal chattel of her husband. It gives her a relative superiority, and she carries this elsewhere. Coitus haud ita fit ut supina mulier viro morem gerat, immo etiam supino viro insidens illa, facie in eum conversâ genibusgue hic atqus illic dispositis negotium illud perficere solet. Hanc veneris figuram feminis inetndiorem, atque idcirco ab iis vindicatam esse perhibent periti. The well-known *jape* by which Iago hoped to arouse Brabantio into activity would be altogether inapplicable here.

Two more excerpts from Mr. Gopal Panniker's little 127
book will be made, with his permission, descriptive of 796
the other two most important national or popular festivals of Malabar.

"THE VISHU FESTIVAL.

"Vishu, like the Onam and the Thiruvathira Festivals, is a 796
remarkable event amongst us. Its duration is limited to one day. The 1st of Mêtam (some day in April) is the unchangeable day on which it falls. It is practically the Astronomical
New Year's Day.* This was one of the periods when in olden [651]
days the subjects of ruling princes or authorities in Malabar under whom their lots were cast, were expected to bring their New Year's offerings to such princes. Failure to comply with the said customary and time-conscerated demands was visited with royal displeasure resulting in manifold varieties of
oppression. The British Government finding this was a great [648]
burden pressing rather heavily upon the people, obtained as far back as 1790, a binding promise from those Native Princes that such exactions of presents from the people should be discontinued thereafter. Consequently it is now shorn of much
of its ancient sanctity and splendour. But suggestive survivals [182]
of the same are still to be found in the presents (explained [431]
further on) which tenants and dependants bring to leading families on the day previous to the Vishu.

"Being thus the commencement of a New Year, native
superstition surrounds it with a peculiar solemn importance. It [777]
is believed that a man's whole prosperity in life depends upon

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* See Madras Museum Bulletin, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 57 and 58. [113]

796 777 the nature, auspicious or otherwise, of the first things that he happens to fix his eyes upon on this particular morning. According to Nair and even general Hindu Mythology there are certain objects which possess an inherent inauspicious character. For instance ashes, firewood, oil and a lot of similar objects are inauspicious ones which will render him who chances to notice them first fare badly in life for the whole year, and their obnoxious effects will be removed only on his seeing holy things, such as, reigning princes, oxen, cows, gold and such like ones on the morning of the next New Year. Whereas wholesome and favourable consequences can be produced by the sight of auspicious objects like those just enumerated. The effects of the sight of these various materials are said to apply even to the attainment of objects by a man starting on a special errand who happens for the first time to look at them after starting. However, with this view, almost every family religiously takes care to prepare the most sight-worthy objects on the New Year morning. Therefore, on the previous night they prepare what is known, in native phraseology, as a *kani*. A small circular bell-metal vessel is taken and some holy objects are systematically arranged inside it. A Grandha or old book made of palmyra leaves, a gold ornament, a new-washed clothe, some "unprofitably gay" flowers of the *Konna* tree, a measure of rice, a so-called looking-glass made of bell-metal, and a few other things, are all tastefully arranged in the vessel and placed in a prominent room inside the house. On either side of this vessel two brass or bell-metal lamps filled with cocoanut oil "clear as diamond sparks" are kept intensely burning and a small plank of wood or some other seat is placed in front of it. At about 5 o'clock in the morning of the day some one who has got up first wakes up the inmates, both male and female, of the house and takes them blindfolded so that they may not gaze at anything else, to the seat near the Kani. The members are seated one after another in the seat and are then and not till then asked to open their eyes and carefully look at this Kani. Then each is made to look at some venerable member of the house or sometimes a stranger even. This over, the little playful urchins of the house begin to fire small crackers which they have bought
735 and stored for the occasion. The Kani is then taken round the place from house to house for the benefit of the poor families, which cannot afford to prepare such a costly adornment. With the close of the carelessly confused noise of the crackers the morning breaks and preparations are begun for the morning
264 meal. This meal is in some parts confined to rice-kanji with a
262 grand appendage of other eatable substances and in others to ordinary rice and its accompaniments, but in either case on grand scales.

796
"Immediately the day dawns the heads of the families give 431
to almost all the junior members and servants of the household
and to wives and children, money-presents varying from 4 as. to
a rupee or two. Children preserve these presents to serve as
their pocket money. In the more numerically large families
similar presents are also made by the heads of particular
branches of the same family to their juniors, children, wives and
servants. These presents are intended to be the forerunners of
incomes to them more splendid all the year round.

"But one other item connected with the festival deserves 556
mention. On the evening of the previous day, about four or 466
five o'clock most well-to-do families distribute paddy or rice, 431
as the case may be, in varying quantities with some other 796
accessories to the family-workmen, whether they live on the
family-estates or not. In return for this, these labourers bring
with them for presentation the fruits of their own labours such
as vegetables of divers sorts, cocoanut oil, jaggery, plantains,
pumpkins, cucumbers, brinjals, &c., in ways such as their
respective circumstances might permit.

"With the close of the noon-meal the festival practically 796
concludes, and nothing remains of it for the next day or for the
same evening, for that matter. In some families after the [535]
noon-meals are over, dancing and games of various kinds are [526]
carried on, which contribute to the enhancement of the pleasantries [524]
incidental to the festival. As on other prominent
occasions, card-playing and other games are also resorted to."

"THE THIRUVATHIRA FESTIVAL.

"Thiruvathira is one of the three great national occasions
of Malabar. It generally comes off in the Malayalam month of
Dhanu (December or January) on the day called the Thiruvathira
day. It is essentially a festival in which females are
almost exclusively concerned and lasts for but a single day.
The popular conception of it is that it is in commemoration of the
death of Kamadevan, the Cupid of our national mythology. As [776]
recorded in the old Puranas, Kamadevan was destroyed in the [773]
burning fire of the third eye of Siva, one of the chief members of
our Divine Trinity. Hence he is now supposed as having only
an ideal or rather spiritual existence, and thus he exerts a powerful
influence upon the lower passions of human nature. The
memory of this unhappy tragedy is still kept alive amongst us,
particularly the female section, by means of the annual celebration
of this important festival. About a week before the day,
the festival practically opens. At about 4 in the morning every [515]
young female member of Nair families with pretensions to decency, [533]
gets out of her bed and takes her bath in a tank. Usually, a
fairly large number of these young ladies collect themselves in

796 the tank for the purpose. Then all or almost all of these plunge
533 in the water and begin to take part in the singing that is pre-
[515] sently to follow. One of these then leads off by means of a
peculiar rhythmic song chiefly pertaining to Cupid. This singing
is simultaneously accompanied by a curious sound produced
with her hand on the water. The palm of the left hand is closed
and kept immediately underneath the surface of the water. Then
the palm of the other is forcibly brought down in a slanting
direction and struck against its surface. So that the water is
completely ruffled and is splashed in all directions producing a
loud deep noise. This process is continuously prolonged
together with the singing. One stanza is now over along with
the sound and then the leader stops a while for the others to
follow her in her wake. This being likewise over, she caps her
first stanza, with another at the same time beating on the water
and so on until the conclusion of the song. Then all of them
make a long pause and then begin another. The process goes on
until the peep of dawn when they rub themselves dry and come
home to dress themselves in the neatest and grandest possible
attire. They also darken the fringes of their eyelids with a sticky
preparation of soot mixed up with a little oil or ghee; and
sometimes with a superficial coating of antimony powder. They
also wear white, black, or red marks lower down the middle of
their foreheads close to the part where the two eyebrows near one
another. They also chew betel and thus redden their mouths
[526] and lips. Then they proceed to the enjoyment of another
prominent item of pleasure, viz., swinging to and fro, on what is
usually known as an Uzhinjal.*

796 "On the festival day after the morning bath is over, they
264 take a light meal and in the noon the family-dinner is voraciously
attacked; the essential and almost universal ingredients of which
262 being ordinary ripe plantain fruits and a delicious preparation
[535] of arrow-root powder purified and mixed with jaggery or sugar
and also cocoanut. Then till evening dancing and merry-making
are ceaselessly indulged in.

796 "The husband population are inexcusably required to be
present in the wives' houses before evening as they are bound
[586] to do on the Onam and Vishu occasions; failure to do which is
looked upon as a step or rather the first step on the part of the
defaulting husband towards a final separation or divorce from the
[132] wife. Despite the rigour of the bleak December season during
which commonly the festival falls, heightened inevitably by the
[515] constant blowing of the cold east wind upon their moistened
frames, these lusty maidens derive considerable pleasure from
their early baths and their frolics in water. The biting cold of

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* A swing made of bamboo.

the season which makes their persons shiver and quiver like 796
aspen-leaves before the breeze, becomes to them in the midst of [515]
all their ecstatic frolics an additional source of pleasure. In short, all these merely tend to brace them up to an extent the like of which they can scarcely find anywhere else.

"The two items described above, viz., the swinging process and the beating on the water, have each its own distinctive significance. The former typifies the attempt which these maidens [776]
make in order to hang themselves on these instruments and destroy their lives in consequence of the lamented demise of their sexual deity, Kamadevan. It is but natural that depth of sorrow will lead men to extreme courses of action. The beating on the water symbolizes their beating their chests in expression of their deep-felt sorrow caused by their Cupid's death. Such in brief is the description of a Nair festival which plays a conspicuous part in the social history of Malabar."

Mr. Gopal Pannikar's chapter on "Local Traditions 776
and Superstitions" ("Malabar and its Folk") has special value, for in it he recounts existing popular belief. He tells us that to demon labourers are attributed the existence of old dilapidated wells and buildings, demons who perform Herculean tasks under orders of a chief. One day these demons having finished their task disturbed their chief when he was playing a game of chess, coming to ask for more work, so he told them to count the waves of the sea; and this is why they are still at work. He [825]
tells us why the crow has a long life and the fowl a short one, and how that the former has but one eye, rolling in a socket; how it is that the common squirrel is marked on the back by the fingers of Vishnu; and much that is of interest about the screech owl, the lizard, the crocodile, and many other things. He recalls to my mind the [777]
popular belief accounting for the unluckiness which will follow should one see the moon on the Chadûrti night, [821]
which I have heard in North Malabar. My note was somehow mislaid. It is that the big-bellied god Ganapati 776
was once upon a time returning home in the moonlight 821
after a repast so generous that his person was much distended, and unable to see his feet, he tripped and stumbled. He looked around to see whether any one had observed his discomfiture. There was no one but the moon. The moon laughed, whereupon he cursed the moon. Hence the belief that whoever sees the moon on that night will be unlucky, probably defamed. Mr. Gopal [184]
Panniker, a native of South Malabar, does not mention it, but in North Malabar women are scrupulously careful not to see the moon or be for a moment in the moonlight

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vehicles, indicate that she is a phallic mother, the 'mother with a penis' who is a common 773
phantasy for European children too. It is well known that in the unconscious minds of 776
Europeans, the phallic mother usually and perhaps always represents the mother armed with
the father's penis, which she has acquired in an act of sadistic intercourse. The infant's fear 182
of approaching her sexually thus becomes a fear of being attacked and castrated by the angry
penis of the father which the mother has taken as her weapon. In the myths the demon may in 831
each case be interpreted as a son-figure, for in each case he acquires power as a devotee who
does penance to Siva, the father-god in the Tamil and Malayalam countries. The son attacks
the mother sexually, but she is pre-armed by Siva or by the other gods with their weapons.
In some myths she uses their phallic symbol, the sword (a common castration symbol), to
behead the demon-son. In the myth of Vanasuran she pierces the demon with the sword
and then kills him with her disc. I associate being killed by means of this circular weapon
with being castrated by the vagina in intercourse, and the disappearance into the hole with
annihilation by being swallowed up in the mother's body, a phantasy which we see too in
the fear of being eaten by the mother. Behind this fear may lie an unconscious desire to return
to the womb. This interpretation is likely because bathing in the *chakkra-theertham* at Cape
Comerin is a means of becoming pure from sin, and purificatory bathing, a common rebirth
symbol.

I suggest that the fear of deflowering a virgin issues from this association of her with the
phallic mother since, like the mother, she is still in the possession of her lineage kinsmen and
defended by their sexual organs, which (in phantasy) they or she may use to castrate or attack
an aggressor. We saw how, in the Nayar rite, the lineage men in fact attack the bridegroom
with 'phallic' missiles (plantain fruits) and how the ritual play with swords suggests a sexual
attack and defence.

A further reason why the *tāli* must be tied before puberty may be that the menstruous 588
woman is particularly closely associated with the mother, menstrual blood (see the blood-
dripping mouth of Bhadrakali) recalling the infantile phantasy of parental intercourse as a 841
sadistic attack by the father in which the mother is wounded and bleeds, but castrates him 182
and acquires the penis. A virgin who had menstruated but was still in the possession of her
lineage kinsmen would thus be too terrifying a creature to deflower. This may be why a 831
woman who matured before the *tāli* was tied (i.e. before she was symbolically deflowered
and removed from the sexual protection of her kinsmen) was considered irrevocably polluting,
a creature to be driven from caste and with whom it would be madness to cohabit. It was
therefore desirable to make her attain puberty fictitiously in advance by the mock menstruation
ceremony, and then actually or symbolically to deflower her before she was in fact mature.
Even so, the bridegroom must be a polluted low caste person, whose ritual purity could not
be further endangered, or a father-figure to the society at large, or a small boy whose act
appears innocuous, or a woman on behalf of her son.

My association of the menstruous woman with the phallic, blood-dripping divine 841
mother rests on the fact that, like the goddess, she is 'sacred' and may not be approached; 773
that she is armed with a knife to ward off evil spirits; and that she is credited with the power
to make men impotent (castrate them) if they foolhardily copulate with her. It must be 831
noticed too that the obscene songs sung by the washermen at a Nayar or a Tiyyar girl's first
menstruation are sung on another occasion, namely the annual Bharani festival to the 182
Bhadrakali of Kodungalur temple in Cochin. In this festival the temple, normally closed
to the 'polluting' castes below Nayars, is for seven days flung open to them and deliberately 796
polluted. On the day previous to Bharani, Nayar and low caste pilgrims, drunk with toddy, 831
armed with long staffs, and carrying live cocks, flock in thousands to the temple from all
parts of Malabar. On the road they sing obscene songs to the goddess and revile in filthy 78
language women whom they meet. [533]

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Tiyyar

796 language women whom they meet. At the temple they are received by young Nayar girls who
831 sell to them a mixture of yellow turmeric powder, blessed by *mantras*, and receive in return a
volley of sexual abuse. Thousands of cocks are sacrificed in the temple yard by the pilgrims
78 as an offering to Bhagavadi who is believed to drink their blood. Hundreds of Nayar, Tiyyar,
and Mannan Bhagavadi oracles from all over Malabar prance wildly in the temple courtyard
in their red cloths and waist-bands of bells, madly chopping their foreheads till blood flows
copiously. In the evening, at a sign from the *adduvari* of Kodungalur, the chief of the Mukkuvans (a low fishing caste of the same culture as Tiyyars) begins the work of polluting the
actual shrine by rushing up to it and beating the outer wall with his stick. According to
Fawcett (1901 p. 245), he formally entered the shrine and defecated on the idol. The crowd
of Nayar and low caste men then hurtle, shouting foul abuse, round the shrine, beat on its
walls, and fling gold and filth into its interior. The festival ends at dusk when they return
quietly home. The next day, the Bharani day itself, the temple is locked and deserted in
fear, since it is believed that for seven days following, the foul demon attendants of the
goddess are given over to depredations of the shrine and of the idol itself. On the seventh day,
its priests reopen the temple, ritually purify it, and restore it to normal high caste worship
again.[1]

796 This attack on the goddess by low caste men who may not normally approach her
831 represents, it seems likely, a sexual attack on the mother by son-figures to whom she is normally denied. In it the high caste priests (fathers) vacate the temple; the rules of purity and
78 pollution are reversed; animal sacrifice is indulged in; women and the goddess are insulted
in a manner contrary to everyday etiquette; and the Bhagavadi idol formally made the
182 object of an anal attack. The ceremony appears to act out cathartically the incestuous phantasies of Nayar and low-caste men towards their mother, and incidentally, in their obscene
attack on the Nayar girls, the repressed desires of low caste men towards forbidden women
564 of the higher castes. I suggest that in the singing of obscene songs by the washermen at a
588 Nayar or Tiyyar puberty ceremony, and the use of the barber as a kind of proxy bridegroom
at the North Malabar Tiyyar *tāli*-rite, these low caste men act out similar phantasies towards
881 higher-caste mother-figures, as well as providing the higher castes with harmless 'polluted'
182 bridegrooms who perform the necessary but dangerous tasks associated with bringing their
girls to womanhood.

831 Why should the Oedipal fear in these castes be so excessively strong that it is necessary
ceremonially to renounce the rights in the sexuality of a natal kinswoman before her puberty,
182 yet at the same time dangerous to be the first to receive these rights? I suggest that this is so
because of the great power accorded to elders in these castes, made possible by the joint
831 ownership of property by the lineage-segment under the legal headship of its senior man.
613 These property-arrangements perpetuate, often until middle age, male economic and emotional dependence on the parental generation, and enforce the attitudes of reverence and
564 masochistic submission to elders which so characterize the higher Hindu castes. This dependence on the parental generation causes male incestuous wishes to remain primarily fixed
423 on the mother, and secondarily on other close natal kinswomen throughout life, and perpetuates the corresponding unconscious fear of male parental vengeance. It is, therefore,
593 in male phantasy, both necessary to give away the sexual rights in natal kinswomen (who are
identified with the mother as desirable but forbidden sexual objects) before they are in
danger of becoming mature, yet at the same time dangerous to deflower the virgins of other
lineages who, being still 'owned' by their own natal kinsmen, are also unconsciously likened
To the mother.

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[1] I saw this festival in 1949. For fuller accounts see Thurston & Rangachari, (1909, V, pp. 400-05) and K. P. Padmanbaha Menon (1933, IV, pp. 333-43).

unless he has been admitted by certain formalities to the village to which he has 621
emigrated, is considered to belong to his original home.

The village is divided into two *Karas* (or *Amsams*), the northern *Kara* and the southern *Kara*. The division is arbitrary and has no significance. A man from Kavalam belonging to the North or South *Kara* is treated in another village as belonging to the same place.

The *Bhagavati* (goddess) Temple in the village was, before the government [346]
took possession of it, owned by *two Karas jointly.* 621

In each of the *Karas* there are five *Āsāns* or *Pramanis*. They keep *Kalaris* and 622
are honoured and respected by all the Nāyars in the district. No common Nāyar [874]
is allowed to sit in their presence, to enter their kitchen, or to call their women
without the title of *Kunjamma* (or Ladyship). [576]

The seventy-five families which the *Kara* contains are divided between the five *Āsāns*. Each *Āsān*, therefore, has a general authority over all the families, and special rights over the fifteen families immediately under his control.

In all matters of ceremony the *Āsāns* have to be informed beforehand. Without 622
their presence, no public ceremony of any family is supposed to be valid. All the [796]
public functions of the village are done by them. The ceremonies of the temple,
for example, are under their control. They are the people who summon the *Karakkars*,
or the villagers, to assemble and settle matters of importance. The villagers settle [623]
in such assemblies, things relating to the community, such as public festivals, the
expenditure of *Karayogam* (common to the village) funds and the behaviour of
people who have acted against the customs of the village. If a marriage ceremony 622
had not been properly conducted, it comes before them. If an *Āsān* had not been 585
properly invited, that matter also comes up for consideration. Instances of punish- 626
ments inflicted by the village on individuals and families were not uncommon till lately. I remember a particular case in which the villagers as a body led by their *Āsān* walked out of the marriage (*Talikettu*) *pandal* because the order of precedence was not kept up. The family of a squire had, during these hard days, become poor, and a rich squire who, in order of precedence, came below him was given a seat of honour. The result was that the whole community walked out as a protest, and the *Kalyanam* had to be held over again to the satisfaction of the poor *Āsān* and his loyal friends.

How strong this organisation is will be seen from the following incident. A 264
gentleman, when coming from Madras, had a Christian friend with him, and his 564
servant who waited for him at Alleppey was eating his food when both of them 626
entered the boat. It is a very rigid custom that no food can be taken in the company, or even in the proximity of any lower caste, and Christians are considered to be such. The result of it was that when they got home the news got abroad that the Nāyar servant had eaten with a Christian in the boat, and the whole village

241 market. All that is necessary is grown in the compound. The great difficulty of village life, effective sanitation, becomes an easy matter.

241 56 Rice cultivation is still based on serf-labour. The Pulayas were the slaves of Nāyars till nearly fifty years ago, when slavery was abolished. But the abolition of slavery has only changed the legal status of the Pulaya. He still remains a landless labourer effectively bound by his former chains, by the great social barrier of caste and the greater difficulty of poverty and ignorance. The Pulaya is an agricultural labourer and nothing else. As long as he remains attached to one family he receives certain sums of money in times of distress, pieces of cloth and food on auspicious occasions, extra payment at childbirth, etc. He loses all this for an insecure wage and a nominal freedom if he leaves his old master. The Pulayas, therefore, have mostly remained serfs in spite of the abolition of slavery.

241 In fertile districts the ordinary methods of cultivation are followed. In the less fertile parts the system of leaving the farms fallow in alternate years, or occasionally once in three years, is followed.

241 796 The harvest time is between April and May. Naturally the gayest part of the Nāyar year is in May and June. The great festivals of all the temples from one end of Malabar to another fall in this part of the year. The festival in a temple extends to ten days, but the last two days are the most important. Very seldom these festivals overlap, and therefore for two full months the Nāyars enjoy an almost uninterrupted carnival. In these places poets from the length and breadth of Malabar come to meet their confrères, artists to exhibit their work, musicians to display their art, astrologers to practise their tricks, in short anybody who has wares to exhibit or sell. No one below a Nāyar in the hierarchy of caste can go to these places. They are, of course, admitted and entertained free. In some places even the food is supplied by the temple. The greatest of all these festive occasions is the *Puram* at Trichur, in Cochin State, which falls at the end of April or the beginning of May. Then there is the *Astamay* at Vaikom a little earlier in the year.

463 [44] The Nāyars, as we noticed at the beginning, are mainly an agricultural people; but a good many of them also go into trade. There are in these days Nāyars very high in Indian commercial circles.

The educated people generally choose the learned professions. In medicine, in law, in journalism, and in public life, they have been very successful. Especially in journalism it is interesting to note that a fair percentage of the editorial staff of the papers in India, whether European or Indian, is drawn from them. The only Indian member of the Viceroy's Cabinet is a Nāyar gentleman, Sir C. Sankaran Nāyar.

434 *Distribution of Wealth, Poverty, etc.*—The distribution of wealth among the Nāyars does not show the same great inequality as among other communities of India. There are moderately rich families having an average income of £10,000 a year, but extreme poverty is unknown. This is mostly due to two reasons:

upon with contempt. It must be noted that they live separately, having little or nothing in common with the other classes, and that the institution is dying a silent and natural death. 536 [554] [182]

Songs.—There have been very many songs current among the Nayars even from a very remote period; and they are chiefly composed and sung in honour of deities, and are mostly prayers addressed to them. A translation of these is not here attempted, for they lose much of their beauty, but the following, however, are the most important of them:— 533 [782]

Bhadrakali Páttu:—These are songs which are sung in honour of Káli, and are supposed to have been composed by the Sudras of Palghat long before the Malayalam era. Certain dramatic songs also appear to have been composed about the same time, and refer to the deities on the hills as well as to the kings of the period. They are sung in towns and villages, between Anamala and Trichur in the east, and the Walayar forests on the other side. The ancient name of these localities was Cheranad, and it was the first place to be occupied by people, when Kerala was a marshy tract. As evidence of this, remains of houses are still to be seen at the foot of the hills. In a place of such historic importance were composed and sung these songs, which are so full of the ideas of the Vedanta and Yoga philosophies, and which give a clue to the nature of the people who once lived there. There is also another variety of songs referring to *Dárikavadham*, (murder of the demon Dárikan), and they are sung by a class of men called the *Kurippans*. There are also other old songs such as the *Sásta páttu* (songs in honour of Sásta). [173] [172]

Ganapati páttu (songs in honour of Ganapati) and serpent songs:—Among the old songs, those referring to agriculture, and composed during the third century of the Malayalam era, occupy a prominent place, and the agriculturists of the northern parts of the State even to-day follow the precepts laid down in these songs. But excepting, the song commemorating the deeds of *Meppayil Kunji Othenan*, the Robinhood of North Malabar, there are no songs which sing of the deeds of brave men.

The chief festivals.—(1). *Onam*:—This is an important national festival, which falls in the second half of August or the first half of September, and is celebrated in commemoration of Mahábali, an *Asura* king, whose reign is believed 796 ● 773

● 796 to have been a period of uninterrupted peace, plenty, and pros-
773 perity. Growing jealous and apprehensive of the glory and
greatness of this great king, the Dévás entreated Vishnu to
quell the pride of this earthly potentate; and Vishnu, there-
upon, appeared as *Vámana* (dwarf, his fifth incarnation) to
request him for a plot of three feet of earth. The prayer was
readily granted by the sovereign, who found to his cost that he
could not satisfy him; for, large as his kingdom was, it was
found to be very small when measured by the *Vámana*, who
eventually placed his foot upon his head and pushed him down
to the regions below. Grieved at the loss of their dear king,
his subjects prayed to Vishnu to allow him to re-visit the earth
once a year, and this is popularly believed to happon on the
Tiruvónam day.

796 The festival is celebrated in honour of his re-appearance,
and with it the return of happy days. It is practically confin-
ed to four days which are observed as holidays throughout
Kérala, and people of all ranks from the prince to the peasant
acknowledge them as such. Ten days before *Tiruvónam*,
signs of the approaching festival are visible in every Nayar
house, which, by its neatness and cleanliness all around, puts
on a gay appearance. A portion of the front yard of the house,
opposite to the store-room, is selected, and there a temporary
stall of mud is put up for the royal visitor to sit upon. Flowers
are strewn over it and on the night previous to the auspicious
[532] day, pyramid-shaped images of the king made of wood or clay,
called *Trikkákarappan*, are placed upon it amid the deafen-
ing cheers of the members of the family who assemble at the
gate to greet him. *Pujas* are daily made both in the morning
and evening before the inmates take their meals, and this con-
[431] tinues up to the closing of the festival. In respectable families
the festival opens with the presents of cloths by the *kárana-
vans* to the junior members of the family as well as to other
close relations, servants, and others. This is also the occasion
when tenants make gifts of curry-stuffs, chiefly banana, for the
celebration of the festival, and they are often rewarded with
796 cloths and also fed. A feast is held on a large scale, all the
574 four days, while the essential element in it is the consumption of
[262] bananas or *nentranpazham*. The fruits are cut into two or three
pieces, boiled in water, and are eaten alone or with *pappadam*.

Another peculiar feature of this festival is that all the male 796
and female members of the family sit apart at meals. By [264]
mid-day the principal meal is over, and each goes dressed in fine attire now, seeks the amusement most congenial to him. Field-games, such as hand-ball or rounders, personal combats, [526]
games of chess, dice, and cards, dancing by females, and music [535]
parties constitute the leading forms of enjoyment from morning [524]
until evening.

Hand-ball matches.—A small stick is planted at a fixed 796
spot, and the young men divide themselves into two rival parties. 526
A member of one party stands at the post, while the others stand away from it. The ball which is usually made of coir rope is thrown by a member of one of the opposing party, and on its being struck by the man at the post, the others attempt to catch it before the bounce or stop its onward career. If the ball hits the post, or if any member of the opposing party catches the ball before it has touched the ground, that player's turn is over. Another man takes his place and so on, until all the members of one party have had their turn. Then the rival section begins to play exactly in the same manner and under the same rules as before.

Combats are of two kinds, namely, those between single adversaries, and those held in batches. In the first, the people of one locality divide themselves into two parties. When the match is opened, the leader of one group brings forward a trained pugilist who goes into the intervening open space, between the two groups, challenging any one from the opposite camp to meet him in fair fight. A little while after, some one from the other party takes up the challenge, and then the combat begins. The victor is rewarded with presents of cloths and money by the rich and generous members of the community assembled there. The same process is continued till the close of the day. In Palghat the *Onam* games are of a rougher character; the tenants of certain landlords turn out each under their own leader and engage in sham fights in which there is much rough play.

There is also another amusement, in which a peculiar 796
bow, formed of a strong and slightly elastic wood with a split 534
bamboo finely polished for the string, is used. By means of a

796 stick, it is possible to produce a kind of musical tone, for [534] which a party is organised to play on it. This entertainment is much admired, and interests the people very much.

(2). *Tiruvátira* :—This is another important national festival, which falls on the *Tiruvátira* day in Dhanu (December- [776] January). This concerns the Nayar women, and is said to commemorate the death of *Káma Déva*, the cupid of Indian mythology, by the burning fire of the third eye of the God [533] Siva. Before day-break the festive day, the young women of the Nayar families hasten to the nearest tank or river for bathing, and during the bath, they amuse themselves with *Tiruvátira pāttu*, songs accompanied by regular splashing of water, supposed to be symbolical of beating of the breast, on account of their grief for Kama's death. At day-break, they return home, and, gaily dressed and adorned, they [526] go to the nearest temple for worship. After a slight breakfast, they proceed to enjoy the *Uzhinjal* (a swinging apparatus made of bamboo and attached to a horizontal branch of a tree). [264] Immense pleasure is taken in this game. The family dinner is at noon, when bananas, sliced and fried in cocoanut-oil, [262] seasoned with salt, are freely distributed among the friends and [431] relatives assembled there. Ripe plantains, and the sweet pre- [263] paration of arrow-root flour purified and seasoned with jaggery or sugar and cocoanuts, also form one of the chief items of the feast.

[804] (3). *Vishu* :—Next in importance to the two great national festivals just described, comes *Vishu* on the first of Medam [777] (March-April), which is the astronomical new year's day; and a man's prosperity during the year is believed to depend on his seeing some good and lucky thing on the *Vishu* morning. It is the custom to prepare on the night previous, what is known as *Kani*. A bell-metal vessel (*uruli*) is taken, and in it are arranged a *grantha* or cadjan manuscript, a gold ornament, a new washed cloth, some flowers of the *konna* tree (Cassia fistula), some coins in a silver cup, a cocoanut cut into two, a cucumber, some mangoes, and a jack-fruit. On either side of the vessel, are also placed two lamps burning, while there is a plank of wood or some other seat placed in front of it. These are placed in the chief room inside the house, and in the morning, the members of the family, one by one, are taken to the

Kani with their eyes shut, and, when they are near it, are 796 directed to open them and look at it. It is taken from house to house for the benefit of the poor. The *káranavan* of the [613] family gives small presents of money to the children, servants, [431] and tenants. It is also the time honoured custom of the State that on this day the chief officials shall pay their respects to His Highness the Raja at his residence at Tripunattura, and receive presents of varying amounts. In former times, it was customary for all the subjects of the ruling princes to pay their respects to their royal masters with some new year's gifts. This custom has disappeared, and in its place small presents [431] are made by tenants and dependents to their landlords which [178] generally consist of cocoanut, plantains, and other curry-stuffs —intended probably as a contribution to the celebration. The [574] day is marked by a grand feast for the members of the household as well as for the tenants and other dependents. To the [431] Pulayans (the family workmen) are given paddy or rice, oil, etc. , on the previous day to enable them to have their own celebrations.

(4). The *Dasara* or *Ayutha Puja*, called also as *Saraswati Puja*, falls in Kanni (September-October) at the autumnal equinox. It is a festival observed in honour of the Goddess [776] *Saraswati*, and every man worships on the last day the implements of his craft and keeps the day a holiday. It is a nine day's festival and is called *Navaratri.*

(5). *Sivaratri*, which falls in Kumbham (February-March), is also an important festival which is observed in common with the members of other higher castes.

Important local festivals.—Of the festivals connected with 796 the temples of the State, the most important is the cock-festi- 184 val (Bharani) at the Cranganore Kali temple, an account of which is given in my notes on the Valans.[1]

In addition to the *Utsavams* (festivals) held once a year in all important temples in the State, there are other popular festivals such as the *Púrams* at Arattupuzha and Trichur, and the *Kongapada* at Chittur. A short account of the latter is given in the following pages.

The Kongapada festival of Chittur.

The name signifies 'war with Kongan'. The festival falls on the Monday succeeding the Wednesday which immediately follows the new moon in the month of Kumbham (February-March) every year. It will

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[1] Vide Vol. I, page 298.

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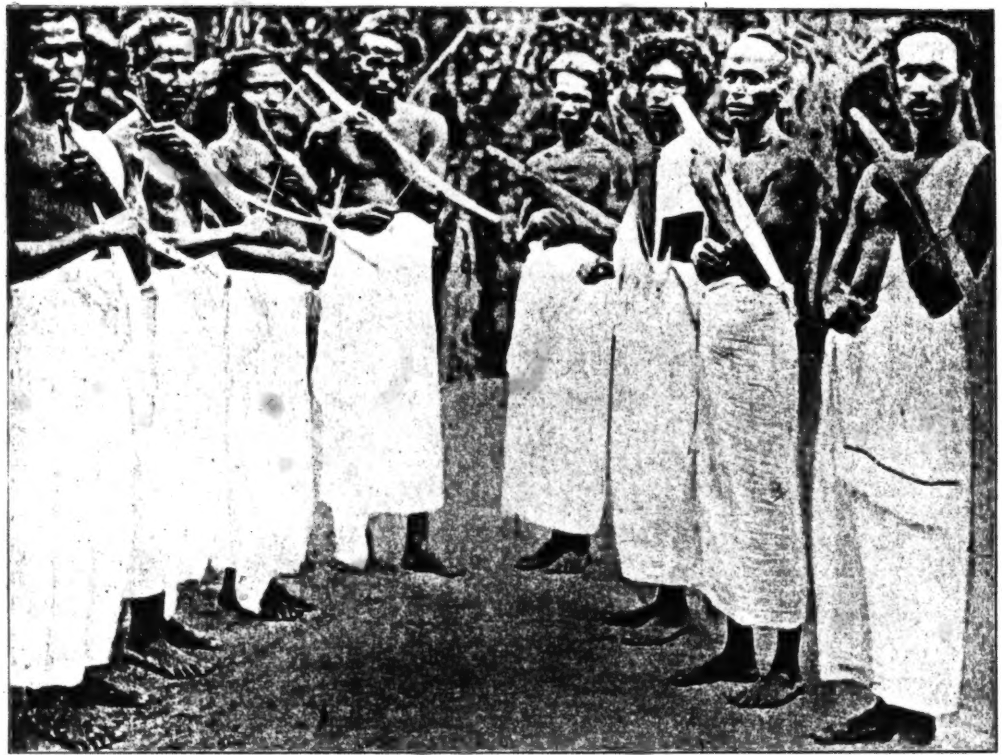
A W11 Kerala A W11
Nayar

[Facing p. 71]



A PARTY OF NAYARS: TIMING ON BOWSTRINGS DURING ONAM FESTIVAL.

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184 come off, therefore, either in the latter part of Kumbham or in
the former part of the next following month of Meenam
according as the new moon in Kumbham occurs earlier or
796 later. The festival is said to be celebrated in commemora-
184 tion of the victory obtained by the local deity, Bhadrakali,
773 widely known by the local designation of Chittur Bhagavati,
in a battle fought with the Kongans, the people of what
776 was known in ancient days as the 'Kongu Desam' compris-
ing the localities included in the present British District
of Coimbatore, and lying to the north and east of the
Chittur Taluk. The final engagement was fought in the
eastern out-skirts of the present town of Chittur, and in it
the Kongu chief called in the old songs by the simple
name of 'Kongan' was slain by the Goddess with her own
hand. The place of engagement is now marked by a small
extent of rocky surface, on which is cut the figure of the Bhaga-
vati's sword with which Kongan's head was cut off. The rock
also shows two holes nearly a foot in depth, and six inches
in diameter. These holes are pointed out by old people
as having been made by the hoofs of the fore-legs of the
Kongan's mount, which is described as a magnificent buff-
bull, when the animal jumped on to the rock in the excitement
caused by the fall of its master from its back slain by the God-
dess. The buff-bull was also slain on the spot. The whole of
the Kongu army was completely routed, and all stampeded to
their country in utter confusion. In the course of the battle a
few men on the side of the Bhagavati were also killed or
wounded, among whom were four important persons belonging
to four ancient families in Chittur, who appear to have been
the leaders of the local militia. The dead bodies of these four
and the wounded were taken from the field of battle and carried
to the town and handed over to the respective families, the
procession being led by the Goddess, who afterwards command-
ed the people to celebrate the victory every year, and after
173 entering the temple disappeared into her image within. Tra-
796 dition speaks thus of the origin of the war. The wealth of the
184 'Kongu Desom' chiefly consisted of chillies, turmeric, corian-
[439] der, cumin seed, mustard, areca nut, etc. These commodities
used to be exported for sale, in return for paddy, from Kongu
[492] Desom to Chittur, Palghat, and other places in large quantities

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laden on the backs of mules, asses, bullocks and buffaloes. 796
When once a large caravansary of Kongu laden with such com- 184
modities was passing through Chittur, the people of the four [439]
desams of Chittur, *viz.*, Chittur, Nallepilli, Tattamangalam,
and Pattancheri, robbed the Kongans of all their animals and [492]
goods. The chief of Kongu, on receiving the information,
naturally felt indignant, and despatched an ultimatum to the
Pramánakkars of Chittur, demanding the surrender of the ani-
mals and the articles, failing which, it was said, he would
overrun the four *desams*, destroy the houses, and kill all peo-
ple even including women and children. On receiving the
ultimatum, the people went to the temple of the Goddess, and
there read the document before the image of the Goddess. It was
so read by a member of the Chittedath house, in whose custody,
it is said, the original document, written in a copper plate, is
still preserved. The reading of the ultimatum, transcribed in
a piece of cadjan, before the Bhagavati, is one of the essential
functions performed on the night of the Kongapada festival
every year, and it is always done by a member of the Chitte-
dath family, who dresses himself up in the fashion of a Kongan
and acts the part of the Kongu chief. When the document [776]
was read and the people prayed to their Goddess in one voice
for protection, the Goddess commanded from within the tem-
ple that her 'children' need not fear and that when the Kongan
took steps to enforce his ultimatum, she would protect them.
On receiving no reply to the ultimatum, the Kongan mobilized
his men and crossed the Walayar river, the northern boundary
of the Chittur Taluk. The information about the crossing of the [314]
boundary was first carried to the Chitturians by the Izhuvans [273]
of the vicinity, who were up the palmyra trees early in the
morning for the purpose of tapping for toddy, and they in a
body climbed down the trees, and without removing their
breast protecting leather straps, tapping knives, mallets and
ladders, ran to the four *desams* all in excitement. In view [564]
of the above fact, the advance portion of the day procession
of the Kongapada festival is even to this day made up of
a number of persons, mostly of the Chetti caste, belonging to
the four *desams*, dressed up in the full toddy-tapping kit of
the Izhuvans. They do so every year in pursuance of religi- [782]
ous vows made by them for the attainment of particular

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796 objects, such as recovery from illness, success in litigation, 184 birth of children, etc.

[782] When the information of the crossing of the Walayar by the chief of Kongu was communicated to the people of the four *desams* by the Izhuvans, they repaired to the temple in excitement and consternation, when Lo! the temple gates opened of themselves and a beautiful female form dressed in full battle armour, brandishing a shining sword and shedding a resplendent divine light, suddenly emerged out of the image within and marched off direct to meet the advancing army of the Kongan, followed by all the brave men among the people. The battle was fought with the result already mentioned. 796 184 This battle is enacted on the night of the Kongapada festival as one of its essential functions, accompanied by the beating of numerous Pariah drums, blowing of horns, racing of horses, torch-light processions, besides, of course, the usual mischief-making among the youngsters, but the elders generally control them and stop excesses. In the course of the sham fight, some act as the wounded, some even as the dead and fall down on the field of action. These dead and wounded are immediately taken up and carried by the youngsters to their supposed respective houses in the town accompanied with torch-lights, beating of drums, beating of breasts, and crying and weeping. No outsider is allowed to take part in this sacred function. If an outsider, being possessed with any sudden fit of enthusiasm, attempts to take part in this function, 'woe be to him.' This battle function takes place at about 10 o'clock in the night and lasts for two or three hours. At the end of it, the night procession of the festival begins from the battle-field and moves through the Nayar quarters to the temple, where it reaches just before day-break, when there is a display of fire-works. After day-break, the chief of the place or *Nádduvázhi* represented by the Chambath house, accompanied by the people, go to the Goddess' temple to offer prayers of love and gratitude to the Bhagavati. The festival is wound up by a performance on the following night called '*Devendra pallu*' in which all the "one hundred Nayars"[1] of Chittur are

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[1] **The Nayar community of Chittur is collectively called by the name of "Chittur Nooru Nayar." It shows that the original village organisation of Chittur consisted of one hundred Nayar houses or families. Although there is a considerable increase in the number of Nayar houses at present, the appellation 'Nooru Nayar' is still used.**

supposed to take part under the supervision and guidance of 796
the Srīkandath Panikkar, whose family is the military in- 184
structor and leader of the people of Chittur. The Panikkar's duty is to train the youths of the 100 houses in the military arts. The performance referred to is, more or less, an exhi- [431]
bition of the bodily prowess of the youths trained by the Panikkar, and at the end of it he receives presents from the *Nāduvāzhi* and one hundred fanoms—one fanom for each house—from his pupils. The amount of one hundred fanoms is still paid to him every year, and is defrayed out of the collection made for the Kongapada festival for which the Panikkar's family is exempted from the payment of all subscriptions. The training of the youths of the place is begun a few weeks before the Kongapada festival in the *kalari* (military gymnasium) of the Srīkandath Panikkar, and the Panikkar takes a prominent part in all the functions connected with the festival from beginning to end.

The "Pana" festival of Chittur.

Once in a few years and commencing on an auspicious [777]
day after *Vishu*, this ceremony is performed on a grand scale, in which the Nayars of the town (one male member from almost every house) organised themselves into parties, one party for singing songs in praise of the Goddess Bhagavati, another for dancing before her, and the third for playing on musical instruments. These men [782]
have, during this period, to bathe early in the morning, cook their own food and remain under a vow to be ever in devotion to the deity. Preliminary to the celebration of the actual festival, which sometimes run for a number of days, the men are given 41 days' training in the several courses of dancing in the Porayattu family house, one of the four *Pramānakkars* (leading members) of the place, and the final performance takes place in the Pokkumarath house.

In the court-yard of the latter house a large pandal supported on 64 posts, is put, up and in its middle is drawn a floral diagram (*padmam*) over which a lighted brass lamp, and in front of it a stool, are placed with a metal pot of water surmounted by a full pod of cocoanut flowers and a washed cloth arranged in the form of a beautiful crown. The Goddess, who [782]
is supposed to be located therein by means of holy *mantrams*, is propitiated every night between 9 and 12 P. M., with offerings and *pujas*, to the accompaniment of drumming, singing,

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184 and dancing. This nightly routine of *pujas*, offerings, dancing,
[782] etc., is thus continued for the prescribed number of days.

On the morning following the last day, the votaries purify
[535] themselves by a bath and fetch branches of *pala* trees, and a
[776] dancing procession is organised, which wends its way through
the Nayar streets, accompanied by the Goddess[1] manifested through her *Velichapad*, to the temple of the Goddess, and from there disperse to their respective houses before evening after singing songs of praise and thanks-giving in honour of the Goddess. A pit, 15 feet long, 5 feet broad and 3 feet deep, is then made and filled with ten to fifteen cart-loads of fuel which is burned and reduced to glowing red hot charcoal.
[787] Here also is performed a *puja*. At about 4 A. M., the *Velichapad*
[789] through whom the Goddess manifests herself, the priests, the votaries, and lastly the caste-men, all walk over the fire several times.

[782] The day dawns and the senior member of the Porayattu family sitting on the stool consecrated to Bhagavati, and covering his head with the silk cloth of the deity, propitiates
[753] her with offerings of fruits, cocoanuts, and fowls. The whole ceremony is thus brought to an end. The object of this pro-
[789] pitiation is to protect people from the attacks of cholera, small-pox, and other epidemics.

Agricultural ceremonies.

241 Before closing this part of the subject, it may be noted that the agricultural year begins with the *Vishu* (first of Medam, about the middle of April) at which
[787] the hot weather is supposed to terminate. In families where the members pursue agriculture as a profession, they send for the local *Kaniyan* (astrologer), who estimates by astronomical calculations the agricultural prospects and the probable quan-
[824] tity of rain during the ensuing year. He is also asked to choose an auspicious day for ploughing, and on that day the master of the house goes to the seed-store with his Pulayan slaves and takes out a small quantity of each variety of seed, which he puts in a cup made of the leaves of the *kanniram* (nux vomica); he then places the cups in a basket near a lamp in the yard and places a small heap of rice around or near it. A new ploughshare fastened to a plough, and a pair of oxen are also brought, and these are painted with rice water. They are then taken in procession to the field, on reaching which the

[1] [i.e., The Goddess Bhagavati -- Analyst]

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[782] the malignant propensities of those spirits. The most popular
of the festivals is the *Mandalam*, which begins on the first of
● 796 Vrischigam (middle of November) and lasts for forty-one days.
776 In addition to the daily *pújas* to the image of Bhagavati by
Brahman priests, special rites and ceremonies (*Kálamezhuthum
Páttum*) are also performed by a particular class of Sudras to
the figure of the goddess made on the floor by means of
776 coloured powders, while the devotees sing songs in her praise
791 796 to the accompaniment of lute-like musical instruments. A
[534] man in a fantastic dress with an array of jingling bells round
[532] his loins, heavy sounding bell-metal anklets on each foot and a
scythe-shaped sword in his hand impersonates the goddess and
dances to the sound of tom-toms round the figure of the goddess
[785] Bhadrakáli on the floor. The *Velichapád*, as he is called,
becomes highly excited and in his frenzy sometimes even cuts
[787] his forehead and causes it to bleed. He speaks, or rather the
deity speaks through him, in broken yet commanding tones
wholly unlike his own and makes oracular responses to the
enquiries addressed to him.

796 On a night in the latter part of the month of Dhanu (early
776 in January), a golden image of the goddess is placed on the back
[532] of a big decorated elephant, and, amidst the beating of drums,
[788] the firing of pop-guns and crackers, is taken out in procession.
The elephant with the goddess is supported on each side by
[231] elephants whose numbers vary according to the means of the
[791] villagers. The *Velichapád* is indispensable and is accompanied
by a group of well-dressed women and girls, each carrying in
her hand a plate (*tálam*) full of rice and a light placed on the
[782] top of it. The festival ends with a display of fire-works, and
the ceremony closes with the sacrifice of goats or fowls. On
the same principle but on different lines are celebrated various
propitiatory and sacrificial festivals in honour of the other
[782] aforesaid deities. Generally, after the harvests, the *Velichapáds*
are taken out in procession to the Hindu houses in each
village to receive offerings of a measure of paddy and small
coins.

776 *Sásta* or *Ayyappan*.—According to Kerálólpathi, Parasu-
778 rama with the object of protecting the newly created country
(Kérala) is said to have established many temples and dedicat-
[788] ed them to this deity. The most important of these is at
Sabarimala in the Chengannur Taluk of Travancore, which

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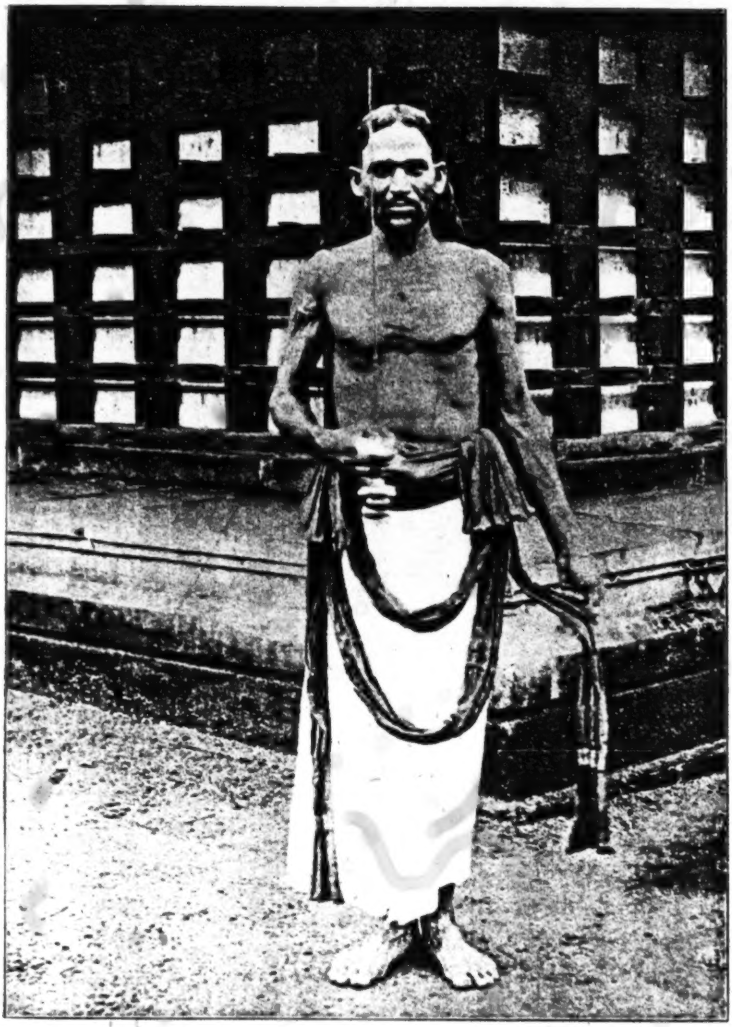

A VELICHAPADU

[facing p.84]

775 time. At the period of puberty and after child-birth women
[881] are especially liable to the attacks of these aërial beings.
[846] Charms and incantations, offerings and sacrifices, are the most
[789] requisite to counteract the evils that demons do, and iron
[782] rings, iron staffs, and leather shoes, are some of the specifics
that help to keep the demons at a distance.

They make their abode chiefly in the palmyra and *púla*
[787] trees, but some of them occupy even dwelling houses. Others
take the shape of human beings, while yet others possess
human beings.

775 Their name is legion, and they exist by the offerings of
782 their votaries and their tormented victims. Against the machi-
nations of these demons, the sorcerers and exorcists bring to
[776] bear the influence of their special guardian deities who in turn
[791] must be propitiated with offerings before they can be called
upon to use their beneficial strength. In the case of the evil
[783] spirit of him who has died an unnatural death, a Brahman
magician purifies the spirit by means of certain ceremonies
called *Tilahóma* (an offering of sesamum seeds to *agni* or fire).
[789] A Chendus Nambuthiri presides at such ceremonies and trans-
fers the spirit to an image of gold, silver, or wood which is
afterwards placed in a Vishnu temple or enshrined in a small
building put up for that purpose, there to rest in peace.

771 In the State, temples are dedicated to various demons,
346 the chief among them being the Avanangáttil Cháttan in
775 Triprayar. The temples dedicated to the small-pox demon
correspond to the *Péy Kóvils* or devil temples of the Tamil
[753] Districts. In these temples are to be found the instruments
● [796] and symbols of demon worship, the dancing sticks or wands,
the priests' garments, tridents, etc., whilst in others there is
nothing save the images of demons. There is also an officiat-
[793] ing priest, who is the devil driver and the devil dancer, and
[791] who at times even becomes a *Velichapád* inspired to communi-
cate to the votaries, who consult him in times of illness and
calamity, the wishes and intentions of that particular demon.

771 To a Hindu all organic life is sacred, and his creed is
225 **Worship of animals and plants.** not to injure any living thing, while among
the animals worshipped by him the cow occu-
pies the first place. The cow is *Kámadhénu*, the giver of all
things, and hence whenever a cow is approached, it is touched

the caste or the grown-up women cook and serve the food to 252 556
the inmates who sit in the dining hall with their own dishes
or with plantain leaves placed before them. In ordinary and
poor families the cooking and serving are done by women alone.

In grand festivities in which food is served to a large 574
number of the caste-men, the preparations are similar to those 564
served at Brahman feasts, a full account of which will be given 252
when I deal with them.

Social status.

The Nayars rank below the Ambalavásis and above the 564
polluting castes. Even among themselves
there are various grades of social precedence,
and the members of higher sub-castes do not freely mingle with
those of the lower. Men of the higher sub-castes may some- [264]
times eat with those of the lower, but their women never take
their meals with those lower to them in the social scale. It is [574]
curious to note that in grand feasts and on ceremonial occa- [796]
sions, good many formalities have to be observed in the [576]
allocation of seats in the dining hall for guests according to
their social status, and any violation of the caste rules or eti-
quette will end in their abruptly leaving the hall. The touch
of the Nayar pollutes the Brahmans, and they themselves in
turn are polluted by the touch of the low caste Sudras. The [262]
consumption of meat does not entail loss of caste, though
many abstain from eating it. They may take or drink water [271]
from the wells belonging either to their own caste or the three
castes above them. Elayathús are their priests, but sometimes [793]
their caste-men also officiate as such, and Nambuthiris give [783]
punnydham (holy water) to the Nayars under pollution. Being in close contact with the Brahmans, they learn to conduct themselves as the Brahmans do, and their morning and evening baths and their worship in temples are as punctual as those of the priestly class.

Dress.

Clothing is of considerable hygienic importance in the life 291
of a nation, and hygiéne plays a considerable part in the dress of a Nayar. A piece of cloth, two to two-and-a-half yards long and one-and-a-half yards broad, is worn round the loins. It must touch the ground or very nearly so, and this method of wearing the cloth gives a simplicity and dignity most suitable to their classic features.
A small upper garment is also worn while at home A Nayar [293]
always carries an umbrella while walking in the sun, but there
is no covering for the head.

613 This psychological pull towards matrilineal kin also applies to the wives.
593 When they decide an important matter they always ask their maternal uncle's
advice, as well as that of their husband. Even the younger generation have great
604 affection for, and a tendency to depend on, the mother's brothers almost in
182 the same way they do their father. Particularly, if the father dies, it is the mother's
brother who actually takes the responsibility. (See the case of *57*.

613 I think the function of matrilineal elements found in these relations is largely
591 supported by the fact that matrilineal members reside near each other, where
they can meet almost every day. Indeed the factors which are vital to the
182 destruction of matrilineal coherence are created by those members who
established their life with their wife and children in places geographically distant
from the land of the Nayar, Kerala, such as New Delhi, Bombay or Calcutta,
for example the members of F, K and L in Diagram. In earlier phases of a
marriage, a man who has to reside very far away because of his job, usually leaves
his wife in her mother's house (as the cases of *91*, *44* and *50*), but when
his job becomes permanent and he has children, usually he takes his wife and
children to his new place. In the course of time, these members tend to have less
and less contact with their matrilineal kin at home, which naturally leads to
social and economic distance from the latter.

Thus the dispersion of members in terms of geographical distance affects
to the actual function of the matrilineal group. In fact I found that the style of
talking about the members of F, K and L sounds considerably different from
that used for the members who reside in the same locality. If geographical
distance is within Kerala, it is a quite different matter from the case of outside
Kerala: for example, a member of a matrilineal group in Ernaklum, resides at
[844] Trivandrum. In such a case, wife certainly comes back to her mother's house for
● [796] child birth, and the members come together at important ceremonial occasions
of the matrilineal group. Within Kerala, the land of Nayar, such activities are
taken for granted in the society.

A great geographical dispersion of the members results in the decrease of
613 the functional members of the matrilineal group centred on the *tarwad*, but on
591 the other hand, this local matrilineal group would increase its size by peripheral
602 members of non-matrilineal descendants: children of the matrilineal male
182 members including their wives. These children stand very close to their father's
matrilinineal kin, with whom their father keeps frequent contact. The children
feel the matrilineal kin of their father equally important to that of the mother.
When all matrilineal members lived in a *tarwad*, the children were aware of the
tarwad members of their non-resident-father, recognizing them as an important
affinal group *(tarwad)*. But I think the degree of familiarity towards these
[594] members greatly differs from that towards the matrilineal kin of the father with
whom they live. Today the actual importance of the father who is the authority
182 in the household, brings *his* matrilineal kin much closer to his children.

613 It is very interesting, I found, that in all households, the fathers of which
were the members of Marayil *tarwad*, an enlarged picture of Prabaty Amma,
602 the foundress of the *tarwad*, was placed at the centre of the guest room. Their
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114 *dbang Nor-pu*), who had already brought us to Kyelang from Kulu. Towards the middle of July, with some added personnel recruited from him and placed under the authority of his daughter, Dölma (*sGrol-ma*), we left for Rupchu and Ladak. (For an account of this journey, see *Chevauchée tibétaine*, by the same author, Fernand Nathan editeur, Paris, 1958.)

My first stage was the Shar Shu monastery, near Kolong, where the
[1092] Wazir of Lahul and his family resided. Here we attended the annual
[1096] masked dance of the lamas, and spent the night at Thakur Partap
Chand's fort-like castle. It was here, too, that I met the *goba* of the
[535] nomads of Rupchu; he was introduced to me by Mangal Chand, alias *amchi* Tashi Dawa, and I received an invitation to go to Korzok.

The next day, we continued to Patseo or Dozam (*rDo-Zam*) as it is called in Tibetan, and camped with Tsewang Norbu, chief of the Gya-kar Kham-pa, and his people for a few days until we received the pack ponies and men which I had ordered from him.

This gave us the opportunity to attend the local fair and annual market here and to see for ourselves in what manner goods from the nomads further north were bought or exchanged for other products by the sedentary Lahulis. We also attended a local show given by travelling enter-
[536] tainers from Spiti, in which they performed the ancient ceremony of breaking a large stone on the chest of a man.

The climb up over the Baralatcha pass (16,147 ft.) was strenuous, but we were soon over it, and travelling on the flat Lingti plain, along the banks of the Yunan river. We reached the Ser chu and then the Tsarab chu, which we forded to reach Spiti. A short distance further on, we crossed the south-eastern boundary of Kashmir, and continued our progress now through that State.

A few days later, we turned in a south-easterly direction so as to reach the shores of the lake called Tso (*mTs'ho*) Morari (this is the name on the map, but I heard locally that it should be more correctly *Moriri*), where the *goba* resided.

We arrived at our destination towards the beginning of August, not without difficulty because we had had to cross some very high passes, one of them the Lagnyal-la (20,600 ft.). Our caravan, both men and horses, suffered from the unusual altitude and, for some days, were quite unable to go on. But finally, we descended to relatively more reasonable heights and were received, some distance away from where we were going to stay, by the *goba* and his nephew. They were both relatives of the Karpa house in Lahul.

We were taken to a camp two miles further on where we found some black, yak-hair, Tibetan tents, standing, as they do, like spiders because of their strange construction. There were flocks of sheep about, as well as a few yaks (*gYag*), animals from which our present hosts, the nomads, made their living. A tent, larger than the others, proved to be that of the *goba*, and we were taken close to it and invited to put up our own tents nearby.

Very soon after our arrival, we attended a masked dance at the [792]
monastery, and the abbot himself acted the Black Hat dancer which is [796]
the principal role. There were many spectators present, all the nomads [535]
of Rupchu taking a particular and obvious pleasure in what they saw.
Another day, we witnessed a ceremony called *zor* (*Zor*) in which a [796]
torma, made of the head, backbone and entrails of a goat, standing on [789]
the animal's skin, was destroyed by lamas armed with great knives, as a way of exorcising devils and evil spirits.

Then came a reception in the *goba's* tent, a festive function at which [574]
there were many guests. We were entertained with *chang*, dried meat, *tsampa*, turnips and buttered tea, and the party was a very gay one in which most of the guests, the *goba* and the abbot included, got roaring drunk.

At another reception to which we were invited at the monastery before leaving and in which all our caravaneers received coloured bits of rag as talismans from the hands of the *tulku*, I was able to inform myself about the marital customs of the nomads.

The day after the reception at the *gompa*, we left for Leh, capital of Ladak (7th August, 1938). It was a cold journey as there was frost already on the high passes, and we had three to cross before we reached lower ground near Tso Kar (*mTs'ho dKar*), "the White Lake". From here, we continued down the Gya valley, where we encountered the first houses and fields again and received our first letter in many weeks, addressed to us by the Superintendent of the Moravian Mission in Ley, the Reverend Walter Asboe. A few stages further on, we crossed the Indus near Upshi, and followed its right bank past Himis and Tikse *gompas* to Sheh, one stage before our destination.

On the 22nd August, 1938, we came to Leh in the early afternoon and were received at the entrance of the town by the Moravian Missionary, the local authorities and a crowd of Ladakis, men, women and children. We were taken past the mile long *mani* walls to the Residency in the south-westerly quarter, where we had been authorized to stay during the period of our visit to Ladak. Very soon, we met those who

Zin-ud-din * noticed the fact that, if a chieftain was slain, 726
his followers attacked and obstinately persevered in rava- 175
ging the slayer's country, and killing his people till their 564
vengeance was satisfied. 701 This custom is doubtless that which was described so long ago as in the ninth century A.D. by two Muhammadans, whose work was translated by Renaudot (Lond., 1733). 'There are kings who, 643
upon their accession, observe the following ceremony. 796
A quantity of cooked rice was spread before the king, 762
and some three or four hundred persons came of their 175
own accord, and received each a small quantity of rice from the king's own hands after he himself had eaten some. By eating of this rice they all engage themselves to burn themselves on the day the king dies or is slain, and they punctually fulfil their promise.' Men, who devoted themselves to certain death on great occasions, were termed Amoucos by the Portuguese; and Barbosa, one of the Portuguese writers, alluded to the practice as prevalent among the Nāyars. Purchas has also the following :—'The king of Cochin hath a great number of Gentlemen, which he calleth Amocchi, and some are called Nairi: these two sorts of men esteem not their lives anything, so that it may be for the honour of the king.' The proper Malayālam term for such men was Chāver, literally those who took up, or devoted themselves to death. It was a custom of the Nāyars, which was readily adopted by the Māppillas, who also at times—as at the great Mahāmakkam, twelfth year feast, at Tirunāvāyi †—devoted themselves to death in the

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* The author of Tahafat-ul-Mujahidin or hints for persons seeking the way to God, as it is frequently translated, or more literally an offering to warriors who shall fight in defence of religion against infidels. Translated by Rowlandson, London, 1833.

† See Manual of the Malabar district, 164, sq., and Fawcett, Madras Museum Bull., III, 3, 1901.

175 company of Nāyars for the honour of the Valluvanad
643 Rāja. And probably the frantic fanatical rush of the
762 Māppillas on British bayonets, which is not even yet
● 796 a thing of the past, is the latest development of this
ancient custom of the Nāyars. The martial spirit of
181 the Nāyars in these piping times of peace has quite
died out for want of exercise. The Nāyar is more and
[224] more becoming a family man. Comparatively few of
them now-a-days even engage in hunting." According
175 to an inscription of the King Kulōttunga I (A.D. 1083-
648 84), he conquered Kudamalai-Nadu, *i.e.*, the western hill
181 country (Malabar), whose warriors, the ancestors of the
703 Nāyars of the present day, perished to the last man in
defending their independence.*

175 The following description of the Nāyars at the
564 beginning of the sixteenth century is given by Duarte
701 Barbosa.† "The Nairs are the gentry, and have no
[411] other duty than to carry on war, and they continually
carry their arms with them, which are swords, bows,
arrows, bucklers, and lances. They all live with the
kings, and some of them with other lords, relations of the
kings, and lords of the country, and with the salaried
governors, and with one another. They are very smart
men, and much taken up with their nobility. . . .
These Nairs, besides being all of noble descent, have to
be armed as knights by the hand of a king or lord with
whom they live, and until they have been so equipped
they cannot bear arms nor call themselves Nairs. . . .
175 In general, when they are seven years of age, they are
868 immediately sent to school to learn all manner of feats
of agility and gymnastics for the use of their weapons.

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* E. Hultzsch, South-Indian Inscriptions, III, 2, 1203.

† Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar. Translation. Hakluyt Society, 1866.

First they learn to dance and then to tumble, and for 175
that purpose they render supple all their limbs from their 868
childhood, so that they can bend them in any direction.
. . . These Nairs live outside the towns separate from 175
other people on their estates which are fenced in. When 564
they go anywhere, they shout to the peasants, that they 683
may get out of the way where they have to pass; and the peasants do so, and, if they did not do it, the Nairs might kill them without penalty. And, if a peasant were by misfortune to touch a Nair lady, her relations would immediately kill her, and likewise the man that touched her and all his relations. This, they say, is done to avoid all opportunity of mixing the blood with that
of the peasants. . . . These are very clean and 175
well-dressed women, and they hold it in great honour to 564
know how to please men. They have a belief amongst 831
them that the woman who dies a virgin does not go to paradise."

Writing in the eighteenth century, Hamilton states* 175
that "it was an ancient custom for the Samorin (Zamorin) 643
to reign but twelve years, and no longer. If he died 762
before his term was expired, it saved him a troublesome ceremony of cutting his own throat on a public scaffold erected for that purpose. He first made a feast for all his nobility and gentry, who were very numerous. After the feast he saluted his guests, went on the scaffold, and very neatly cut his own throat in the view of the assembly. His body was, a little while after, burned with great pomp and ceremony, and the grandees elected a new Samorin.
Whether that custom was a religious or a civil ceremony 175
I know not, but it is now laid aside, and a new custom 178
is followed by the modern Samorin, that a jubilee is 643
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* New Account of the East Indies, 1744.

175 proclaimed throughout his dominion at the end of twelve
178 years, and a tent is pitched for him in a spacious plain,
643 and a great feast is celebrated for ten or twelve days with
796 mirth and jollity, guns firing night and day, so at the end
of the feast any four of the guests that have a mind to gain a crown by a desperate action in fighting their way through thirty or forty thousand of his guards, and kill the Samorin in his tent, he that kills him succeeds him in his empire. In Anno 1695 one of these jubilees happened, and the tent pitched near Ponnany, a sea-port of his about fifteen leagues to the southward of Calicut. There were but three men that would venture on that desperate action, who fell on, with sword and target, among the guards, and, after they had killed and wounded many, were themselves killed. One of the desperadoes had a nephew of fifteen or sixteen years of age that kept close by his uncle in the attack on the guards, and, when he saw him fall, the youth got through the guards into the tent, and made a stroke at his Majesty's head, and had certainly dispatched him if a large brass lamp which was burning over his head had not marred the blow, but, before he could make another, he was killed by the guards, and I believe the same Samorin reigns yet."

175 It is noted by Sonnerat * that the Nāyars "are the
564 warriors; they have also the privilege of enjoying all the
683 women of their caste. Their arms, which they constantly
carry, distinguish them from the other tribes. They are besides known by their insolent haughtiness. When they perceive pariahs, they call out to them, even at a great distance, to get out of their way, and, if any one of these unfortunate people approaches too near a Nair, and through inadvertence touches him, the Nair has a right

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* Voyage to the East Indies, 1774 and 1781.

In a recent note, Mr. K. Kannan Nāyar writes[*]: 588
"Almost every Nāyar officer in Government employ, [648]
when applying for leave on account of the kettukalliānam of his daughter or niece, states in his application that he has to attend to the 'marriage' of the girl. The ceremony is generally mentioned as marriage even in the letters of invitation sent by Nāyar gentlemen in these days. . . . 796 ●
. This ceremony is not intended even for the betrothal 588
of the girl to a particular man, but is one instituted [779]
under Brāhman influence as an important kriya (sacrament) antecedent to marriage, and intended, as the popular saying indicates, for dubbing the girl with the status of Amma, a woman fit to be married. The saying is Tāli-kettiu Amma āyi, which means a woman has become an Amma when her tali-tying ceremony is over."

In summing up the evidence collected by him, Mr. 588
L. Moore states[†] that it seems to prove beyond all reason- 178
able doubt that "from the sixteenth century at all events, 174
and up to the early portion of the nineteenth century, the relations between the sexes in families governed by marumakkattayam were of as loose a description as it is possible to imagine. The tāli-kettu kalyānam, introduced by the Brāhmans, brought about no improvement, and indeed in all probability made matters much worse by giving a quasi-religious sanction to a fictitious marriage, which bears an unpleasant resemblance to the sham marriage ceremonies performed among certain inferior castes elsewhere as a cloak for prostitution. As years passed, some time about the opening of the nineteenth century, the Kērala Mahatmyam and Keralolpathi were concocted, probably by Nambūdris, and false and pernicious doctrines as to the obligations laid on the

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[*] Malabar Quart. Review, VII, 3, 1908.

[†] *Op. cit.*

585 served with food, after which they are conducted to a
574 room, where betel and other chewing stuff is placed on
[276] brass or silver plates called thālam. The chewing over,
sweetmeats are served, and then all go to the bridal
chamber, where the women of the house and others are
assembled with the bride, who, overcome with shyness,
585 hides herself behind the others. Here again the bridegroom
and his party go through more chewing, while they
chat with the women. After a while the men withdraw,
wishing the couple all happiness, and then the women,
departing one by one, leave the couple alone, one of
[431] them shutting the door from the outside. The Pattar
Brāhmans always collect on these occasions, and receive
small presents (dakshina) of two to four annas each, with
betel leaves and areca nuts from the bridegroom, and
sometimes from the bride. A few who are invited receive
their dakshina in the bridal chamber, the others outside.
[513] Those of the bridegroom's party who live far away are
given sleeping accommodation at the bride's house [in a
Nāyar house the sleeping rooms of the men and women
are at different ends of the house]. About daybreak
next morning the bridegroom leaves the house with his
party, leaving under his pillow 8, 16, 32, or 64 rupees,
according to his means, which are intended to cover
the expenses of the wife's household in connection
with the ceremony. The sambandham is now complete.
[591] The girl remains in her own taravad house, and her
[613] husband visits her there, coming in the evening and
leaving next morning. A few days after the com-
[431] pletion of the ceremony, the senior woman of the
[796] bridegroom's house sends some cloths, including pavu
mundu (superior cloths) and thorthu mundu (towels),
and some oil to the bride for her use for six months.
Every six months she does the same, and, at the Ōnam,

Vishu, and Thiruvathīra festivals, she sends besides a 585
little money, areca nuts, betel and tobacco. The money [431]
sent should be 4, 8, 16, 32, or 64 rupees. Higher sums
are very rarely sent. Before long, the women of the [796]
husband's house express a longing for the girl-wife to be 585
brought to their house, for they have not seen her yet. 574
Again the astrologer is requisitioned, and, on the day [787]
he fixes, two or three of the women go to the house of
the girl, or, as they call her, Ammāyi (uncle's wife).
They are well treated, and presently bring away the girl
with them. As she is about to enter the gate-house of
her husband's taravad, the stile of which she crosses right
leg first, two or three of the women meet her, bearing a
burning lamp and a brass plate (thālam), and precede
her to the nalukattu of the house. There she is seated [788]
on a mat, and a burning lamp, a nazhi (measure) of rice,
and some plantains are placed before her. One of the
younger women takes up a plantain, and puts a piece
of it in the Ammāyi's mouth; a little ceremony called
madhuram tītal, or giving the sweets for eating. She [431]
lives in her husband's house for a few days, and is then
sent back to her own with presents, bracelets, rings or
cloths, which are gifts of the senior woman of the house.
After this she is at liberty to visit her husband's house
on any day, auspicious or inauspicious. In a big taravad, 613
where there are many women, the Ammāyi does not, as 596
a rule, get much sympathy and good-will in the house- 585
hold, and, if she happens to live temporarily in her [591]
husband's house, as is sometimes, though very rarely
the case in South Malabar, and to be the wife of the
Karanavan, it is observed that she gets more than her
share of whatever good things may be going. Hence
the proverb, 'Place Ammāyi Amma on a stone, and grind
her with another stone.' A sambandham ceremony at

the present day, a sumptuous feast at the cost of each 178
villager in rotation, and partaken of by all assembled, 574
and a small offering to the temple, are all that remains
to commemorate it. Astrology is believed in, and some 787
of its votaries are spoken of as Trikalagnas, or those
who know the past, present, and future. It is due
to a curse of Siva on the science of his son, who made
bold by its means to predict even the future of his
father, that occasional mistakes are said to occur in
astrological calculations. Sorcery and witchcraft are 754
believed to be potent powers for evil. To make a
person imbecile, to paralyse his limbs, to cause him
to lavish all his wealth upon another, to make him deaf
and dumb, and, if need be, even to make an end of him,
are not supposed to be beyond the powers of the
ordinary wizard. Next to wizardry and astrology, 787
palmistry, omens, and the lizard science are generally
believed in. In the category of good omens are placed
the elephant, a pot full of water, sweetmeats, fruit, fish
and flesh, images of gods, kings, a cow with its calf,
married women, tied bullocks, gold lamps, ghee, milk, and
so on. Under the head of bad omens come the donkey,
a broom, buffalo, untied bullock, barber, widow, patient,
cat, washerman, etc. The worst of all omens is [825]
beyond question to allow a cat to cross one's path. An
odd number of Nāyars, and an even number of Brāhmans,
are good omens, the reverse being particularly bad.
On the Vinayaka-chaturthi day in the month of Avani, [821]
no man is permitted to look at the rising moon under
penalty of incurring unmerited obloquy.

"The chief religious festival of the Nāyars is Ōnam, 796
which takes place in the last week of August, or first
week of September. It is a time of rejoicing and merriment. Father Paulinus, writing in the latter half of the

796 eighteenth century, observes that about the tenth of September the rain ceases in Malabar. All nature seems then as if renovated; the flowers again shoot up, and the trees bloom. In a word, this season is the same as that which Europeans call spring. The Ōnam festival is said, therefore, to have been instituted for the purpose of soliciting from the gods a happy and fruitful [237] year. It continues for eight days, and during that time the Indians are accustomed to adorn their houses with [825] flowers, and to daub them over with cow-dung, because the cow is a sacred animal, dedicated to the Goddess Lakshmi, the Ceres of India. On this occasion they also put on new clothes, throw away all their old earthenware, and replace it by new. Ōnam is, according to some, the annual celebration of the Malabar new year, which first began with Cheraman Perumal's departure for Mecca. But, with the majority of orthodox Hindus, it is the day of the annual visit of Mahabali to his country, which he used to govern so wisely and well before his overthrow. There is also a belief that it is Maha-Vishnu who, on Ōnam day, pays a visit to this mundane universe, for the just and proper maintenance of which he is specially responsible. In some North Malabar title-deeds and horoscopes, Mr. Logan says, the year is taken as ending with the day previous to Ōnam. This fact, he notes, is quite reconcileable with the other explanation, which alleges that the commencement of the era coincides with Perumal's departure for Arabia, if it is assumed, as is not improbable, that the day on which he sailed was Thiruvōnam day, on which acknowledgment of fealty should have been made. Ōnam, it may be observed, is a contraction of Thiruvōnam which is the asterism [824] of the second day of the festival. Throughout the festival, boys from five to fifteen years of age go out

early in the morning to gather flowers, of which the 796
kadali is the most important. On their return, they sit 824
in front of the tulasi (sacred basil) mandapam, make a [532]
carpet-like bed of the blossoms which they have collected, and place a clay image of Ganapati in the centre. A writer in the Calcutta Review * describes how having set out at dawn to gather blossoms, the children return with their beautiful spoils by 9 or 10 A.M., and then the daily decoration begins. The chief decoration consists of a carpet made out of the gathered blossoms, the smaller ones being used in their entirety, while the large flowers, and one or two varieties of foliage of different tints, are pinched up into little pieces to serve the decorator's purpose. This flower carpet is invariably made in the centre of the clean strip of yard in front of the neat house. Often it is a beautiful work of art, accomplished with a delicate touch and a highly artistic sense of tone and blending. The carpet completed, a miniature pandal (booth), hung with little festoons, is erected over it, and at all hours of the day neighbours look in, to admire and criticise the beautiful handiwork."

"Various field sports, of which foot-ball is the chief, 796
are indulged in during the Ōnam festival. To quote 526
Paulinus once more, the men, particularly those who are young, form themselves into parties, and shoot at each other with arrows. These arrows are blunted, but exceedingly strong, and are discharged with such force that a considerable number are generally wounded on
both sides. These games have a great likeness to the [171]
Ceralia and Juvenalia of the ancient Greeks and Romans."

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* January, 1899.

shouting, gesticulation and laughter. Those returning, 526 after securing a large number of arrows, turned somersaults, and expressed their joy in saltatory motions." In a note on this game with bows and arrows in Kurumbranad, Mr. E. F. Thomas writes that "the players form themselves into two sides, which shoot alternately at the mark. Beside the mark stand representatives of the two sides. When the mark is hit by a member of either side, on his representative shouting 'Run, man,' he runs up the lists. His object is to seize the mark before it is hit by any one belonging to the other side. If he can do this, his side takes all the arrows which have been shot, and are sticking in the stop-butt. If, on the other hand, the mark is hit by the other side before he reaches it, he may not seize the mark. A member of the other side runs up in his turn to seize the mark if possible before it is hit again by the first side. If he can do this, he takes out, not all the arrows, but only the two which are sticking in the mark. If, while number two is running, the mark is hit a third time, a member of the first side runs up, to seize the mark if possible. The rule is that one or three hits take all the arrows in the stop-butt, two or four only the arrows sticking in the mark. Great excitement is shown by all who take part in the game, which attracts a number of spectators. The game is played every fortnight by Nâyars, Tiyans, Māppillas, and others. I am told that it is a very old one, and is dying [178] out. I saw it at Naduvanūr."

The Ōnam games in the south-east of Malabar, in 796 the neighbourhood of Palghat, are said by Mr. Fawcett 526 to be of a rough character, "the tenants of certain jenmis 184 (landlords) turning out each under their own leader, and engaging in sham fights, in which there is much rough play. Here, too, is to be seen a kind of boxing, which

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526 would seem to be a relic of the days of the Roman
[184] pugiles using the cestus in combat. The position taken
up by the combatants is much the same as that of the
[175] pugiles. The Romans were familiar with Malabar from
about 30 B.C. to the decline of their power.* We may
safely assume that the 3,000 lbs. of pepper, which Alaric
demanded as part of the ransom of Rome when he
besieged the city in the fifth century, came from
Malabar." Swinging on the uzhinjal, and dancing to the
accompaniment of merry songs, are said to be characteristic
amusements of the womankind during Ōnam
festival, and, on the Patinaram Makam, or sixteenth day
after Thiruvonam. This amusement is indulged in by
both sexes. It is noted by Mr. Fawcett that "the cloths
given as Ōnam presents are yellow, or some part of them
[431] is yellow. There must be at least a yellow stripe or a
[174] small patch of yellow in a corner, which suggests a relic
[178] of sun-worship in a form more pronounced than that
which obtains at present. It is a harvest festival, about
the time when the first crop of paddy (rice) is harvested."

796 Concerning another important festival in Malabar,
the Thiruvathira, Mr. T. K. Gopal Panikkar writes as
follows.† "Thiruvathira is one of the three great
national occasions of Malabar. It generally comes off
in the Malayālam month of Dhanu (December or January)
on the day called the Thiruvathira day. It is
essentially a festival in which females are almost exclu-
[776] sively concerned, and lasts for but a single day. The
[773] popular conception of it is that it is in commemoration
of the death of Kāmadēvan, the Cupid of our national
mythology. As recorded in the old Purānas, Kāmadēvan

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* See Thurston. Catalogue of Roman, etc., Coins, Madras Government Museum, 2nd ed., 1894.

† Malabar and its Folk, 1900.

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[776]
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was destroyed in the burning fire of the third eye of Siva, one of the chief members of our divine Trinity. Hence he is now supposed to have only an ideal or rather spiritual existence, and thus he exerts a powerful influence upon the lower passions of human nature. The memory of this unhappy tragedy is still kept alive among us, particularly the female section, by means of the annual celebration of this important festival. About a week before the day, the festival practically opens. At about four in the morning, every young female of Nair families with pretensions to decency gets out of bed, and takes her bath in a tank. Usually a fairly large number of these young ladies collect at the tank for the purpose. Then all, or almost all of them, plunge in the water, and begin to take part in the singing that is presently to follow. One of them then leads off by means of a peculiar rhythmic song, chiefly pertaining to Cupid. This singing is simultaneously accompanied by a curious sound produced with her hand on the water. The palm of the left hand is closed, and kept immediately underneath the surface of the water. Then the palm of the other is forcibly brought down in a slanting direction, and struck against its surface, so that the water is completely ruffled, and is splashed in all directions, producing a loud deep noise. This process is continuously prolonged, together with the singing. One stanza is now over along with the sound, and then the leader stops awhile for the others to follow in her wake. This being likewise over, she caps her first stanza with another, at the same time beating on the water, and so on until the conclusion of the song. All of them make a long pause, and then begin another. The process goes on until the peep of dawn, when they rub themselves dry, and come home to dress

796 themselves in the neatest and grandest possible attire.
[302] They also darken the fringes of their eyelids with a
sticky preparation of soot mixed up with a little oil or
ghee, and sometimes with a superficial coating of
[276] antimony powder. They also wear white, black, or red
marks down the middle of their foreheads. They also
chew betel, and thus redden their mouths and lips.
[526] They then proceed to the enjoyment of another
prominent item of pleasure, viz., swinging to and fro on
what is usually known as an uzhinjal, or swing made
[262] of bamboo. On the festival day, after the morning bath
is over, they take a light meal, and in the noon the
family dinner is voraciously attacked, the essential and
almost universal ingredients being ordinary ripe plantain
fruits, and a delicious preparation of arrowroot powder
purified and mixed with jaggery (crude sugar) or sugar,
and also cocoanut. Then, till evening, dancing and
[593] merry-making are ceaselessly indulged in. The husband
population are inexcusably required to be present in the
wives' houses before evening, as they are bound to do on
[586] the Ōnam and Vishu occasions. Failure to do this is
looked upon as a step, or rather the first step, on the
part of the defaulting husband towards a final separa-
[132] tion or divorce from the wife. Despite the rigour of
the bleak December season during which the festival
commonly falls, heightened inevitably by the constant
blowing of the cold east wind upon their moistened
frames, these lusty maidens derive considerable pleasure
from their early baths, and their frolics in the water.
The biting cold of the season, which makes their persons
shiver and quiver, becomes to them in the midst of all
their ecstatic frolics an additional source of pleasure.
The two items described above, viz., the swinging and
beating of the water, have each their own distinctive

significance. The former typifies the attempt which 796
these maidens make in order to hang themselves on [776]
these instruments, and destroy their lives in consequence
of the lamented demise of their sexual deity Kāmadēvan.
The beating on the water symbolises their beating their
chests in expression of their deep-felt sorrow caused by
their Cupid's death."

Yet another important festival, Vishu, is thus
described by Mr. Gopal Panikkar. "Vishu, like the
Ōnam and Thiruvathira festivals, is a remarkable event
among us. Its duration is limited to one day. The 1st
of Mētam (some day in April) is the unchangeable day,
on which it falls. It is practically the astronomical new
year's day. This was one of the periods when, in olden 796
days, the subjects of ruling princes or authorities in 651
Malabar, under whom their lots were cast, were expected
to bring their new year's offerings to such princes.
Failure to comply with the customary and time-consecrated
demands was visited with royal displeasure,
resulting in manifold varieties of oppression. The [648]
British Government, finding this was a great burden,
pressing rather heavily upon the people, obtained as
far back as 1790 a binding promise from those Native
Princes that such exactions of presents from the people
should be discontinued thereafter. Consequently the [178]
festival is now shorn of much of its ancient sanctity and
splendour. But suggestive survivals of the same are
still to be found in the presents, which tenants and
dependents bring to leading families on the day previous
to the Vishu. Being the commencement of a new year, 796
native superstition surrounds it with a peculiar solemn
importance. It is believed that a man's whole prosperity [777]
in life depends upon the nature, auspicious or otherwise, [787]
of the first things that he happens to fix his eyes upon

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on this particular morning. According to Nair, and even general Hindu mythology, there are certain objects which possess an inherent inauspicious character. For instance, ashes, firewood, oil, and a lot of similar objects are inauspicious ones, which will render him who chances to notice them first fare badly in life for the whole year, and their obnoxious effects will be removed only on his seeing holy things, such as reigning princes, oxen, cows, gold, and such like, on the morning of the next new year. The effects of the sight of these various materials are said to apply even to the attainment of objects by a man starting on a special errand, who happens for the first time to look at them after starting. However, with this view, almost every family religiously takes care to prepare the most sightworthy objects on the new year morning. Therefore, on the previous night they prepare what is known as a kani. A small circular bell-metal vessel is taken, and some holy objects are systematically arranged inside it. A grandha or old book made of palmyra leaves, a gold ornament, a new-washed cloth, some 'unprofitably gay' flowers of the konna tree (*Cassia Fistula*), a measure of rice, a so-called looking-glass made of bell-metal, and a few other things, are all tastefully arranged in the vessel, and placed in a prominent room inside the house. On either side of this vessel two brass or bell-metal lamps, filled with cocoanut oil clear as diamond sparks, are kept burning, and a small plank of wood, or some other seat, is placed in front of it. At about 5 o'clock in the morning of the day, some one who has got up first wakes up the inmates, both male and female, of the house, and takes them blindfolded, so that they may not gaze at anything else, to the seat near the kani. The members are seated, one after another, in the seat, and

are then, and not till then, asked to open their eyes, and 796
carefully look at the kani. Then each is made to look 777
at some venerable member of the house, or sometimes 787
a stranger even. This over, the little playful urchins
of the house begin to fire small crackers, which they
have bought and stored for the occasion. The kani 796
is then taken round the place from house to house for
the benefit of the poor families, which cannot afford to
prepare such a costly adornment. With the close of the
noise of the crackers, the morning breaks, and
preparations are begun for the morning meal. This meal is [264]
in some parts confined to rice kanji (gruel) with a grand [262]
appendage of other eatable substances, and in others to
ordinary rice and its accompaniments, but in either case
on a grand scale. Immediately the day dawns, the heads [431]
of the families give to almost all the junior members and
servants of the household, and to wives and children,
money presents to serve as their pocket-money. In the
more numerically large families, similar presents are
also made by the heads of particular branches of the
same family to their juniors, children, wives and servants.
One other item connected with the festival deserves
mention. On the evening of the previous day, about [556]
four or five o'clock, most well-to-do families distribute [431]
paddy or rice, as the case may be, in varying quantities,
and some other accessories to the family workmen,
whether they live on the family estates or not. In
return for this, these labourers bring with them for
presentation the fruits of their own labours, such as
vegetables of divers sorts, cocoanut oil, jaggery,
plantains, pumpkins, cucumbers, brinjals (fruit of *Solanum
Melongena*), etc., according as their respective
circumstances permit. With the close of the midday meal [264]
the festival practically concludes. In some families, after

In some families, after
796 the meal is over, dancing and games of various kinds
526 are carried on, which contribute to the enhancement of
535 the pleasantries incidental to the festival. As on other
[524] prominent occasions, card-playing and other games are
also resorted to."

264 On the subject of religion, Mr. Fawcett writes as
515 follows. "No Nāyar, unless one utterly degraded by
the exigencies of a Government office, would eat his
782 food without having bathed and changed his cloth. It
783 is a rule seldom broken that every Nāyar goes to the
[512] temple to pray at least once a day after having bathed;
generally twice a day. The mere approach anywhere
[564] near his vicinity of a Cheruman, a Pulayan, or any
inferior being, even a Tiyan, as he walks to his house
from the temple, cleansed in body and mind, his marks
newly set on his forehead with sandal-wood paste, is
pollution, and he must turn and bathe again ere he
[683] can enter his house and eat. Buchanan tells us that in
his time, about a century ago, the man of inferior caste
thus approaching a Nāyar would be cut down instantly
[656] with a sword; there would be no words. Now that
the people of India are inconvenienced with an Arms
[671] Act which inhibits sword play of this kind, and with a
[178] law system under which high and low are rated alike,
the Nāyar has to content himself with an imperious
grunt-like shout for the way to be cleared for him
as he stalks on imperturbed. His arrogance is not
diminished, but he cannot now show it in quite the
same way.

796 "I will attempt a description of the ceremonial
[773] observed at the Pishāri kāvu—the Pishāri temple near
Quilandy on the coast 15 miles north of Calicut, where
Bhagavati is supposed in vague legend to have slain
an Āsura or gigantic ogre, in commemoration of which

event the festival is held yearly to Bhagavati and her 796
followers. The festival lasts for seven days. When I [773]
visited it in 1895, the last day was on the 31st of March.
Before daybreak of the first day, the ordinary temple
priest, a Mūssad, will leave the temple after having
swept it and made it clean; and (also before daybreak) [793]
five Nambūtiris will enter it, bearing with them sudhi
kalasam. The kalasam is on this occasion made of the [237]
five products of the cow (panchagavyam), together with [778]
some water, a few leaves of the banyan tree, and darbha
grass, all in one vessel. Before being brought to the [789]
temple, mantrams or magic verses will have been said
over it. The contents of the vessel are sprinkled all
about the temple, and a little is put in the well, thus
purifying the temple and the well. The Nambūtiris [793]
will then perform the usual morning worship, and, either
immediately after it or very soon afterwards, they leave
the temple, and the Mūssad returns and resumes his
office. The temple belongs to four taravāds, and no [613]
sooner has it been purified than the Kāranavans of [783]
these four taravāds, virtually the joint-owners of the
temple (known as Urālas) present to the temple servant
(Pishārodi) the silver flag of the temple, which has been
in the custody of one of them since the last festival.
The Pishārodi receives it, and hoists it in front of the
temple (to the east), thus signifying that the festival has
begun. While this is being done, emphasis and grandeur [441]
is given to the occasion by the firing off of miniature [201]
mortars such as are common at all South Indian festivals.
After the flag is hoisted, there are hoisted all round the
temple small flags of coloured cloth. For the next [788]
few days there is nothing particular to be done beyond
the procession morning, noon, and night; the image of
Bhagavati being carried on an elephant to an orchestra

796 of drums, and cannonade of the little mortars. All those
who are present are supposed to be fed from the temple.
[564] There is a large crowd. On the morning of the fifth
day, a man of the washerman (Vannān) caste will
[203] announce to the neighbours by beat of tom-tom that
[788] there will be a procession of Bhagavati issuing from the
gates of the temple, and passing round about. Like all
794 those who are in any way connected with the temple,
796 this man's office is hereditary, and he lives to a small
564 extent on the bounty of the temple, *i.e.*, he holds a little
[428] land on nominal terms from the temple property, in
[425] consideration for which he must fulfil certain requirements for the temple, as on occasions of festivals. His
office also invests him with certain rights in the community. In the afternoon of the fifth day, the Vannān
and a Manūtan, the one following the other, bring two
umbrellas to the temple; the former bringing one of
cloth, and the latter one of cadjan (palm leaves). I
am not sure whether the cloth umbrella has been in
the possession of the Vannān, but think it has. At all
events, when he brings it to the temple, it is in thorough
repair—a condition for which he is responsible. The
cadjan umbrella is a new one. Following these two as
they walk solemnly, each with his umbrella, is a large
crowd. There are processions of Bhagavati on the
elephant encircling the temple thrice in the morning, at
[326] noon, and at night. Early on the sixth day, the headman of the Mukkuvans (fishermen), who by virtue of
his headship is called the Arayan, together with the
blacksmith and the goldsmith, comes to the temple
followed by a crowd, but accompanied by no orchestra of
drums. To the Arayan is given half a sack of rice for
himself and his followers. A silver umbrella belonging
to the temple is handed over to him, to be used when

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he comes to the temple again in the evening. To the 794
blacksmith is given the temple sword. The goldsmith 564
receives the silver umbrella from the Arayan, and [326].
executes any repairs that may be needful, and, in like
manner, the blacksmith looks to the sword. In the [482]
afternoon, the headman of the Tiyans, called the Tandān,
comes to the temple followed by two of his castemen [782]
carrying slung on a pole over their shoulders three
bunches of young cocoanuts—an appropriate offering, the
Tiyans being those whose ordinary profession is climbing
the cocoanut palm, drawing the toddy, securing the
cocoanuts, etc. This time there will be loud drumming,
and a large crowd with the Tandān, and in front of him
are men dancing, imitating sword play with sticks and
shields, clanging the shields, pulling at bows as if firing
off imaginary arrows, the while shouting and yelling
madly. Then come the blacksmith and the goldsmith [326]
with the sword. Following comes the Arayan with the
silver umbrella to the accompaniment of very noisy
drumming, in great state under a canopy of red cloth held
lengthways by two men, one before, the other behind.
The procession of Bhagavati continues throughout the
night, and ceases at daybreak. These six days of the 796
festival are called Vilākku. A word about the drumming. 534
The number of instrumentalists increases as the festival
goes on, and on the last day I counted fifty, all Nāyars.
The instruments were the ordinary tom-tom, a skin
stretched tight over one side of a circular wooden band,
about 1½ feet in diameter and 2 or 3 inches in width,
and the common long drum much narrower at the ends
than in the middle; and there were (I think) a few of
those narrow in the middle, something like an hourglass
cut short at both ends. They are beaten with
curved drum sticks, thicker at the end held in the hand.

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796 The accuracy with which they were played on, never a
[533] wrong note although the rhythm was changed perpetually,
was truly amazing. And the crescendo and
diminuendo, from a perfect fury of wildness to the
gentlest pianissimo, was equally astonishing, especially
796 when we consider the fact that there was no visible
794 leader of this strange orchestra. Early on the seventh
564 and last day, when the morning procession is over, there
comes to the temple a man of the Pānan caste (umbrella-
[293] makers and devil-dancers). He carries a small cadjan
umbrella which he has made himself, adorned all round
the edges with a fringe of the young leaves of the
cocoanut palm. His approach is heralded and noised
just as in the case of the others on the previous day.
The umbrella should have a long handle, and, with it in
his hand, he performs a dance before the temple. The
temple is situated within a hollow square enclosure,
which none in caste below the Nāyar is permitted to
enter. To the north, south, east, and west, there is a
level entrance into the hollow square, and beyond this
entrance no man of inferior caste may go. The Pānan
receives about 10 lbs. of raw rice for his performance.
In the afternoon, a small crowd of Vettuvars come to
the temple, carrying with them swords, and about ten
small baskets made of cocoanut palm leaves, containing
[422] salt. These baskets are carried slung on a pole. The
[685] use of salt here is obscure.* I remember a case of a
Nāyar's house having been plundered, the idol knocked
[572] down, and salt put in the place where it should have
[786] stood. The act was looked on as most insulting. The
Vettuvans dance and shout in much excitement, cutting
their heads with their own swords in their frenzy. Some

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* The Vettuvans were once salt-makers.

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of them represent devils or some kind of inferior evil 796
spirits, and dance madly under the influence of the 564
spirits which they represent. Then comes the Arayan [326]
as on the previous day with his little procession, and
lastly comes the blacksmith with the sword. The
procession in the evening is a great affair. Eight elephants, 796
which kept line beautifully, took part in it when I witnessed 231
it. One of them, very handsomely caparisoned, 788
had on its back a priest (Mūssad) carrying a sword [793]
smothered in garlands of red flowers representing the
goddess. The elephant bearing the priest is bedizened
on the forehead with two golden discs, one on each
side of the forehead, and over the centre of the forehead
hangs a long golden ornament. These discs on the
elephant's forehead are common in Malabar in affairs of
ceremony. The Māppilla poets are very fond of comparing [538]
a beautiful girl's breasts to these cup-like discs.
The elephant bears other jewels, and over his back is a
large canopy-like red cloth richly wrought. Before the [411]
elephant walked a Nāyar carrying in his right hand
in front of him a sword of the kind called nāndakam
smeared with white (probably sandal) paste. To its
edge, at intervals of a few inches, are fastened tiny bells,
so that, when it is shaken, there is a general jingle.
Just before the procession begins, there is something 796
for the Tiyans to do. Four men of this caste having 564
with them pūkalasams (flower kalasams), and five 794
having jannakalasams, run along the west, north, and 778
east sides of the temple outside the enclosure, shouting
and making a noise more like the barking of dogs than
anything else. The kalasams contain arrack (liquor), [273]
which is given to the temple to be used in the ceremonies.
Members of certain families only are allowed [465]
to perform in this business, and for what they do each

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[465] man receives five edangālis of rice from the temple, and
a small piece of the flesh of the goat which is sacrificed
later. These nine men eat only once a day during the
[834] festival; they do no work, remaining quietly at home
[841] unless when at the temple; they cannot approach any one
of caste lower than their own; they cannot cohabit with
women; and they cannot see a woman in menstruation
during these days. A crowd of Tiyans join more or
less in this, rushing about and barking like dogs, making
a hideous noise. They too have kalasams, and, when
they are tired of rushing and barking, they drink the
arrack in them. These men are always under a vow.
[782] In doing what they do, they fulfil their vow for the
benefit they have already received from the goddess—
796 cure from sickness as a rule. To the west of the
564 temple is a circular pit—it was called the fire-pit, but
there was no fire in it—and this pit all the Tiyan women
of the neighbourhood circumambulate, passing from
west round by north, three times, holding on the head
a pewter plate, on which are a little rice, bits of plantain
leaves and cocoanut, and a burning wick. As each
woman completes her third round, she stands for a
moment at the western side, facing east, and throws the
[782] contents of the plate into the pit. She then goes to the
western gate of the enclosure, and puts down her plate
for an instant while she makes profound salaam to the
796 goddess ere going away. Now the procession starts
776 out from the temple, issuing from the northern gate,
788 and for a moment confronts a being so strange that he
demands description. Of the many familiar demons of
the Malayālis, the two most intimate are Kuttichchāttan
and Gulikan, who are supposed to have assisted Kāli
(who is scarcely the Kāli of Brāhmanism) in overcoming
the Āsura, and on the occasion of this festival these

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demons dance before her. Gulikan is represented by 796
the Vannān and Kuttichchāttan by the Manūtan who 776
have been already mentioned, and who are under like restrictions with the nine Tiyans. I saw poor Gulikan 796
being made up, the operation occupying five or six 776
hours or more before his appearance. I asked who 536
he was, and was told he was a devil. He looked mild 788
enough, but then his make-up had just begun. He was lying flat on the ground close by the north-east entrance of the enclosure, where presently he was to dance, a man painting his face to make it hideous and frightful. This done, the hair was dressed; large bangles were put on his arms, covering them almost completely from the shoulder to the wrist; and his head and neck were swathed and decorated. A wooden platform arrangement, from which hung a red ornamented skirt, was fastened to his hips. There was fastened to his back an elongated Prince of Wales' feathers arrangement, the top of which reached five feet above his head, and he was made to look like nothing human. Kuttichchāttan was treated in much the same manner. As the procession issues from the northern gate of the temple, where it is joined by the elephants, Gulikan stands in the northern entrance of the enclosure (which he cannot enter), facing it, and a halt is made for three minutes, while Gulikan dances. The poor old man who represented this fearful being, grotesquely terrible in his wonderful metamorphosis, must have been extremely glad when his dance was concluded, for the mere weight and uncomfortable arrangement of his paraphernalia must have been extremely exhausting. It was with difficulty that he could move at all, let alone dance. The procession passes round by east, where, at the entrance of the enclosure, Kuttichchāttan gives his

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788 dance, round by south to the westward, and, leaving
776 the enclosure, proceeds to a certain banyan tree, under
536 which is a high raised platform built up with earth
and stones. Preceding the procession at a distance of
796 fifty yards are the nine men of the Tiyan caste mentioned
564 already, carrying kalasams on their heads, and a
788 crowd of women of the same caste, each one carrying
a pewter plate, larger than the plates used when encircling
the fire pit, on which are rice, etc., and the burning
wick as before. The plate and its contents are on
this occasion, as well as before, called talapōli. I could
not make out that anything in particular is done at the
banyan tree, and the procession soon returns to the
temple, the nine men and the Tiyan women following,
[782] carrying their kalasams and talapōli. On the way, a
number of cocks are given in sacrifice by people under a
vow. In the procession are a number of devil-dancers,
garlanded with white flowers of the pagoda tree mixed
with red, jumping, gesticulating, and shouting, in an
avenue of the crowd in front of the elephant bearing the
sword. The person under a vow holds the cock towards
one of these devil-dancers, who, never ceasing his gyrations
and contortions, presently seizes its head, wrings
[755] it off, and flings it high in the air. The vows which
are fulfilled by this rude decapitation of cocks have been
made in order to bring about cure for some ailment.
The procession passes through the temple yard from west
to east, and proceeds half a mile to a banyan tree, under
which, like the other, there is a high raised platform.
When passing by the temple, the Tiyan women empty the
contents of their plates in the fire pit as before, and the
nine men hand over the arrack in their kalasams to
the temple servants. Let me note here the curious distribution
of the rice which is heaped in the fire pit.

Two-thirds of it go to the four Tiyans who carried the 796 pūkalasams, and one-third to the five who carried the 564 jannakalasams. 788 Returning to the procession, we find it at the raised platform to the east of the temple. On [804] this platform have been placed already an ordinary bamboo quart-like measure of paddy (unhusked rice), and one of rice, each covered with a plantain leaf. The principal devil-dancer takes a handful of rice and paddy, and flings it all around. The procession then visits in turn the gates of the gardens of the four owners of the temple. At each is a measure of rice and a measure of paddy covered with plantain leaves, with a small lamp or burning wick beside them, and the devil-dancer throws a handful towards the house. The procession then finds its way to a tree to the west, under which, on the platform, is now a measure of paddy and a lamp. Some Brāhmans repeat mantrams, and the elephant, the priest on his back and the sword in his hand, all three are supposed to tremble violently. Up to this time the procession has moved leisurely at a very slow march. Now, starting suddenly, it proceeds at a run to the temple, where the priest descends quickly from the elephant, and is taken inside the temple by the Mūssad priests. He, who has been carrying the sword all this time, places it on the sill of the door of the room in which it is kept for worship, and prostrates before it. The [778] sword then shakes itself for fifteen minutes, until the chief priest stays its agitation by sprinkling on it some tirtam fluid made sacred by having been used for anointing the image of the goddess. This done, the chief amongst 796 the devil-dancers will, with much internal tumult as well 787 as outward convolutions, say in the way of oracle whether the dêvi has been pleased with the festival in her honour, or not. As he pronounces this oracular utterance, he falls

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[787] in a sort of swoon, and everyone, excepting only the
priests and temple servants, leaves the place as quickly
796 as possible. The sheds which have been erected for
782 temporary habitation around the temple will be quickly
demolished, and search will be made round about to
make sure that no one remains near while the mystic rite
of sacrifice is about to be done. When the whole place
has been cleared, the four owners of the temple, who
have stayed, hand over each a goat with a rope tied
round its neck to the chief priest, and, as soon as they
[793] have done so, they depart. There will remain now in the
temple three Mūssads, one drummer (Marayar), and two
[534] temple servants. The reason for all this secrecy seems
[794] to lie in objection to let it be known generally that any
sacrifice is done. I was told again and again that there
796 was no such thing. It is a mystic secret. The Mūssad
789 priests repeat mantrams over the goats for an hour as a
782 preliminary to the sacrifice. Then the chief priest dons
793 a red silk cloth, and takes in his hand a chopper-like
sword in shape something like a small bill-hook, while
the goats are taken to a certain room within the temple.
This room is rather a passage than a room, as there are
to it but two walls running north and south. The goats
are made to stand in turn in the middle of this room,
facing to the south. The chief priest stands to the east
of the goat, facing west, as he cuts off its head with the
chopper. He never ceases his mantrams, and the goats
never flinch—the effect of the mantrams. Several cocks
are then sacrificed in the same place, and over the
carcasses of goats and cocks there is sprinkled charcoal
powder mixed in water (karutta gurusi) and saffron
(turmeric) powder and lime-water (chukanna gurusi), the
flow of mantrams never ceasing the while. The three
Mūssads only see the sacrifice—a part of the rite which

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is supremely secret. Equally so is that which follows. 789
The carcass of one goat will be taken out of the temple 782
by the northern door to the north side of the temple, 793
and from this place one of the temple servants, who is blindfolded, drags it three times round the temple, the Mūssads following closely, repeating their mantrams, the drummer in front beating his drum softly with his fingers. The drummer dare not look behind him, and does not know [534]
what is being done. After the third round, the drummer and the temple servant go away, and the three Mūssads cook some of the flesh of the goats and one or two of the cocks (or a part of one) with rice. This rice, when cooked, is taken to the kāvu (grove) to the north of the temple, and there the Mūssads again ply their mantrams. As each mantram is ended, a handful of saffron (turmeric) [533]
powder is flung on the rice, and all the time the drummer, who by this time has returned, keeps up an obligato pianissimo with his drum, using his fingers. He faces the north, and the priests face the south. Presently the priests run (not walk) once round the temple, carrying the cooked rice, and scattering it wide as they go, repeating mantrams. They enter the temple, and remain within until daybreak. No one can leave the temple until morning comes. Before daybreak, the temple is thoroughly swept and cleaned, and then the Mūssads go out, and the five Nambūtiris again enter before sunrise, and perform the ordinary worship thrice in the day, for this day only. The next morning, the Mūssad priests return and resume their duties. Beyond noting that the 796
weirdness of the human tumult, busy in its religious 564
effusion, is on the last night enhanced by fireworks, [541]
mere description of the scene of the festival will not be attempted, and such charming adjuncts of it as the gallery of pretty Nāyar women looking on from the

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564 garden fence at the seething procession in the lane below [793] must be left to the imagination. It will have been noticed that the Nambūtiris hold aloof from the festival; they purify the temple before and after, but no more. 796 The importance attached to the various offices of those 793 who are attached to the temple by however slender 577 a thread, was illustrated by a rather amusing squabble between two of the Mukkuvans, an uncle and nephew, as to which of them should receive the silver umbrella from the temple, and bear it to the house of the goldsmith to be repaired. During the festival, one of them made a rapid journey to the Zamorin (about fifty miles distant), paid some fees, and established himself as the senior who had the right to carry the umbrella.

796 "An important local festival is that held near Palghat, 184 in November, in the little suburb Kalpāti inhabited entirely by Pattar Brāhmans from the east. But it is not a true Malayāli festival, and it suffices to mention its existence, for it in no way represents the religion of the Nāyar. The dragging of cars, on which are placed the images of deities, common everywhere from the temple of Jagganath at Pūri in Orissa to Cape Comorin, is quite unknown in Malabar, excepting only at Kalpāti, which is close to the eastern frontier of Malabar.

782 "Near Chowghāt (Chavagāt), about 30 miles to the [131] southward of Calicut, on the backwater, at a place called [346] Guruvayūr, is a very important temple, the property of [635] the Zamorin, yielding a very handsome revenue. I visited the festival on one occasion, and purchase was made of [126] a few offerings such as are made to the temple in satis- [532] faction of vows—a very rude representation of an infant in silver, a hand, a leg, an ulcer, a pair of eyes, and, most curious of all, a silver string which represents a man, the giver. Symbolization of the offering of self is made by

a silver string as long as the giver is tall. Goldsmiths 782
working in silver and gold are to be seen just outside the [326]
gate of the temple, ready to provide at a moment's notice
the object any person intends to offer, in case he is not
already in possession of his votive offering. The subject
of vows can be touched on but incidentally here. A vow
is made by one desiring offspring, to have his hand or leg
cured, to have an ulcer cured, to fulfil any desire whatsoever,
and he decides in solemn affirmation to himself
to give a silver image of a child, a silver leg, and so on,
in the event of his having fulfilment of his desire.

"A true Malayāli festival is that held at Kottiyūr in 796
North Malabar, in the forest at the foot of the Wynād
hills rising 3,000 to 5,000 feet from the sides of the little
glade where it is situated. It is held in July during the
height of the monsoon rain. Though it is a festival for
high and low, these do not mix at Kottiyūr. The Nāyars [564]
go first, and after a few days, the Nāyars having done,
the Tiyans, and so on. A curious feature of it is that the
people going to attend it are distinctly rowdy, feeling
that they have a right to abuse in the vilest and filthiest
terms everyone they see on the way—perhaps a few days'
march. And not only do they abuse to their hearts'
content in their exuberant excitement, but they use
personal violence to person and property all along the
road. They return like lambs. At Kottiyūr one sees [346]
a temple of Īsvara, there called Perumāl (or Perumāl
Īsvara) by the people, a low thatched building forming
a hollow square, in the centre of which is the shrine,
which I was not permitted to see. There were some [793]
Nambūtiri priests, who came out, and entered into
conversation. The festival is not held at the temple, but
in the forest about a quarter of a mile distant. This spot [778]
is deemed extremely sacred and dreadful. There was,

796 778 however, no objection to myself and my companions visiting it; we were simply begged not to go. There were with us a Nāyar and a Kurichchan, and the faces of these men, when we proceeded to wade through the little river, knee-deep and about thirty yards wide, in order to reach the sacred spot, expressed anxious wonder. They dared not acompany us across. No one (excepting, of course, a Muhammadan) would go near the place, unless during the few days of the festival, when it was safe; at all other times any man going to the place is destroyed instantly. Nothing on earth would have persuaded the Nāyar or the Kurichchiyan to cross that river. Orpheus proceeding to find his Eurydice, Danté about to enter the Inferno, had not embarked on so fearful a journey. About a hundred yards beyond the stream, we came upon the sacred spot, a little glade in the forest. In the centre of the glade is a circle of piled up stones, 12 feet in diameter. In the middle of the pile of stones is a rude lingam. Running east from the circle of the lingam is a long shed, in the middle of which is a long raised platform of brick, used apparently as a place for cooking. Around the lingam there were also thatched sheds, in which the people had lodged [788] during the festival. Pilgrims going to this festival [782] carry with them offerings of some kind. Tiyans take young cocoanuts. Every one who returns brings with him a swish made of split young leaves of the cocoanut palm."

796 788 [793] [778] Of the Kottiyūr festival, the following account is given in the Gazetteer of Malabar. "The Nambūdiri priests live in a little wayside temple at Kottiyūr, but the true shrine is a quarter of a mile away in the forest across one of the feeder streams of the Valarpattanam river. For eleven months in the year, the scene is

inconceivably desolate and dreary; but during the month 796
Edavam (May-June) upwards of 50,000 Nāyars and 788
Tiyans from all parts of Malabar throng the shrine for
the twenty-eight days of the annual festival. During the
rest of the year, the temple is given up to the revels of
Siva and Parvati, and the impious Hindu who dares to
intrude is consumed instantly to ashes. The two great
ceremonies are the Neyyāttam and the Elanīrāttam, the
pouring of ghee (clarified butter) and the pouring of the
milk of the green cocoanut. The former is performed [564]
by the Nāyars, who attend the festival first, and the
latter by Tiyans. In May, all roads lead to Kottiyūr, [785]
and towards the middle of the month the ghee pourers, [783]
as the Nāyar pilgrims are called, who have spent the
previous four weeks in fasting and purificatory rites,
assemble in small shrines subordinate to the Kottiyūr
temple. Thence, clad in white, and bearing each
upon his head a pot of ghee, they set forth in large
bodies headed by a leader. At Manattana the pilgrims
from all parts of Malabar meet, and thence to Kottiyūr
the procession is unbroken. However long their journey, [195]
the pilgrims must eat only once, and the more filthy
their language, the more orthodox is their conduct.
As many as five thousand pots of ghee are poured over
the lingam every year. After the Neyyāttam ceremony,
the Nāyars depart, and it is the turn of the Tiyans.
Their preparations are similar to those of the Nāyars,
and their language *en route* is even more startling.
Eruvatti near Kadirūr is the place where most of them [782]
assemble for their pilgrimage, and their green cocoanuts
are presented gratis by the country people as an offering
to the temple. The Elanīrāttam ceremony begins at
midnight, and the pilgrims heap up their cocoanuts in
front of the shrine continuously till the evening of the

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788 same day. Each Tiyan then marches thrice round the heap, and falls prostrate before the lingam; and a certain Nāyar sub-caste removes the husks preparatory to the
[789] spilling of the milk. The festival finally closes with a mysterious ceremony, in which ghee and mantrams play a great part, performed for two days consecutively by the presiding Nambūdiri, and Kottiyūr is then deserted for another year."

"A shrine," Mr. Fawcett continues, "to which the Malayālis, Nāyars included, resort is that of Subramania at Palni in the north-west corner of the Madura district about a week's march from the confines of Malabar near
[765] Palghat. Not only are vows paid to this shrine, but men,
[302] letting their hair grow for a year after their father's
[782] death, proceed to have it cut there. The plate shows an ordinary Palni pilgrim. The arrangement which he
796 is carrying is called a kāvadi. There are two kinds of
788 kāvadi, a milk kāvadi containing milk, and a fish kāvadi
782 containing fish, in a pot. The vow may be made in respect of either, each being appropriate to certain circumstances. When the time comes near for the pilgrim to start for Palni, he dresses in reddish orange cloths, shoulders his kāvadi, and starts out. Together with a man ringing a bell, and perhaps one with a tom-tom, with ashes on his face, he assumes the rôle of a beggar. The well-to-do are inclined to reduce the beggar period to the minimum; but a beggar every votary must be, and as a beggar he goes to Palni in all humbleness and humiliation, and there he fulfils his vow, leaves his kāvadi and his hair, and a small sum of money. Though the individuals about to be noticed were not Nāyars, their cases illustrate very well the religious idea of the Nāyar as expressed under certain circumstances, for between the Nāyars and these there

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is in this respect little if any difference. It was at Guru- 796
vayūr in November, 1895. On a high raised platform 788
under a peepul tree were a number of people under 782
vows, bound for Palni. A boy of 14 had suffered as a
child from epilepsy, and seven years ago his father vowed
on his behalf that, if he were cured, he would make the
pilgrimage to Palni. He wore a string of beads round
his neck, and a like string on his right arm. These
were in some way connected with the vow. His head
was bent, and he sat motionless under his kāvadi,
leaning on the bar, which, when he carried it, rested on
his shoulder. He could not go to Palni until it was
revealed to him in a dream when he was to start. He
had waited for this dream seven years, subsisting on
roots (yams, etc.), and milk—no rice. Now he had
had the long-looked-for dream, and was about to start.
Another pilgrim was a man wearing an oval band of 796
silver over the lower portion of the forehead, almost 788
covering his eyes; his tongue protruding beyond the 785
teeth, and kept in position by a silver skewer through it.
The skewer was put in the day before, and was to be
left in for forty days. He had been fasting for two years.
He was much under the influence of his god, and
whacking incessantly at a drum in delirious excitement.
Several of the pilgrims had a handkerchief tied over
the mouth, they being under a vow of silence. One [782]
poor man wore the regular instrument of silence, the
mouth-lock—a wide silver band over the mouth, and a
skewer piercing both cheeks. He sat patiently in a
nice tent-like affair, about three feet high. People fed
him with milk, etc., and he made no effort to procure
food, relying merely on what was given him. The use
of the mouth-lock is common with the Nāyars when
they assume the pilgrim's robes and set out for Palni;

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788 and I have often seen many of them garbed and mouth-
[789] locked, going off on a pilgrimage to that place. Pilgrims generally go in crowds under charge of a priestly guide, one who, having made a certain number of journeys to the shrine, wears a peculiar sash and other gear. They call themselves pūjāris, and are quite *au fait* with all the ceremonial prior to the journey, as well as with the exigencies of the road. As I stood there, one of these pūjāris stood up amidst the recumbent crowd. He raised his hands towards the temple a little to the west, and then spread out his hands as if invoking a blessing on the people around him. Full of religious fervour, he was (apparently at any rate) unconscious of all but the spiritual need of his flock.

796 "Brief mention must be made of the festival held
788 at Kodungallūr near Cranganore in the northernmost
184 corner of the Cochin State, as it possesses some strange features peculiar to Malabar, and is much frequented by the Nāyars. I have been disappointed in obtaining particulars of the festival, so make the following excerpt from Logan's Manual of Malabar. 'It takes the people in great crowds from their homes. The whole country near the lines of march rings with the shouts "Nada-a Nada-a" of the pilgrims to the favourite shrine. Of what takes place when the pilgrims reach this spot perhaps the less said the better. In their passage up to the shrine, the cry of "Nada-a Nada-a" (march, march away) is varied by terms of unmeasured abuse levelled
[195] at the goddess (a Bhagavati) of the shrine. This abusive language is supposed to be acceptable to her. On arrival at the shrine, they desecrate it in every conceivable way, believing that this too is acceptable; they throw stones and filth, howling volleys of

opprobrium at her house. The chief of the fisherman 796
caste, styled Kūli Muttatta Arayan, has the privilege of 788
being the first to begin the work of polluting the Bhoot 184
or shrine. Into other particulars it is unnecessary [564]
to enter. Cocks are slaughtered and sacrificed. The [782]
worshipper gets flowers only, and no holy water after
paying his vows. Instead of water, he proceeds outside
and drinks arrack or toddy, which an attendant Nāyar
serves out. All castes are free to go, including Tiyars [564]
and low caste people. The temple was originally only
a Bhoot or holy tree with a platform. The image in
the temple is said to have been introduced only of
recent years.' It is a pity Mr. Logan is so reticent.
My information is that the headman of the Mukkuvans
opens the festival by solemnly making a fæcal deposit
on the image. Here again there is the same strange
union of everything that is filthy, abusive, foul and
irreverent, with every mode of expressing the deepest
religious feeling."

Of the cock festival at Cranganore, the following 796
account is given by Mr. T. K. Gopal Panikkar* in his 778
interesting little book on Malabar and its folk. "In 776
the midst of its native charms is situated a temple
dedicated to Kali, the goddess who presides over the
infectious diseases, cholera and small-pox. She is a [753]
virgin goddess, whom no quantity of blood will satisfy.
The temple is an old-fashioned one, presenting no
striking architectural peculiarities. The priestly classes [564]
attached to it are not, as usual, Brāhmins, but a peculiar [795]
sect called Adigals, of whom there are but three families [793]
in the whole of Malabar. The Brāhmins are purposely
excluded from participation in the poojah ceremonies,

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* Malabar and its Folk, Madras, 1900.

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796 lest their extreme sanctity might increase the powers
778 of the goddess to a dangerous extent. Poojahs are
[793] daily offered to her. An annual festival known as the
[784] Bharani, connected with this goddess, plays a most
important part in the religious history of Malabar. It
comes off in the Malayalam month of Meenam (about
788 March or April). Pilgrimages undertaken to the temple
796 on this occasion are potent enough to safeguard the
pilgrims, and their friends and relations, from the
perilous attacks of cholera and small-pox. Hence people
resort thither annually by thousands from almost all
parts of Malabar; and, the more north you go, the
stronger will you find the hold which the goddess has
[782] upon the popular imagination. The chief propitiatory
offering on the occasion is the sacrifice of
cocks. In fact, every family makes a point of undertaking
this sacred mission. People arrange to start
on it at an auspicious moment, on a fixed day in
small isolated bodies. Preparations are made for the
journey. Rice, salt, chillies, curry-stuffs, betel leaves
and nuts, a little turmeric powder and pepper, and,
above all, a number of cocks form an almost complete
paraphernalia of the pilgrimage. These are all
gathered and preserved in separate bundles inside a large
[293] bag. When the appointed hour comes, they throw this
bag on their shoulders, conceal their money in their
[481] girdles, and, with a native-fashioned umbrella in the one
hand and a walking-stick in the other, they start, each
from his own house, to meet the brother pilgrims at
the rendezvous. Here a foreman is selected practically
[533] by common consent. Then commences the vociferous
recitation of that series of obscene songs and ballads,
which characterises the pilgrimage all along. The foreman
it is that opens the ball. He is caught up by others

in equally loud and profuse strains. This is continued 788
right up till the beginning of their homeward journey. 796
Nobody whom they come across on the way can successfully escape the coarse Billingsgate of these religious
zealots. Even women are not spared. Perhaps it is in
their case that the pilgrims wax all the more eloquently
vulgar. A number of cock's feathers are stuck or tied
upon the tip of a stick, and with this as a wand they
begin to dance and pipe in a set style, which is extremely
revolting to every sense of decency. Some of the pilgrims
walk all the distance to the temple, while others go by
boat or other conveyance; but in neither case do they
spare any passer-by. Hundreds of gallons of arrack and [273]
toddy are consumed during the festival. The pilgrims
reach the temple in their dirty attire. The temple
premises are crowded to overflowing. The worship of 788
the goddess is then commenced. The offerings consist 796
of the sacrifice of cocks at the temple altar, turmeric 782
powder, but principally of pepper, as also some other
objects of lesser importance. A particular spot inside
the temple is set apart for the distribution of what is
called manjal prasadam (turmeric powder on which
divine blessings have been invoked). The work of
doling it out is done by young maidens, who are during
the process subjected to ceaseless volleys of vile and
vulgar abuse. Now, leaving out of account the minor
ceremonies, we come to the principal one, viz., the
sacrifice of cocks. The popular idea is that the greater
the number of cocks sacrificed, the greater is the efficacy
of the pilgrimage. Hence men vie with one another in
the number of cocks that they carry on the journey.
The sacrifice is begun, and then there takes place a
regular scramble for the sanctified spot reserved for this
butchering ceremony. One man holds a cock by the

788 796 trunk, and another pulls out its neck by the head, and, in 782 the twinkling of an eye, by the intervention of a sharpened knife, the head is severed from the trunk. The blood then gushes forth in forceful and continuous jets, and is poured on a piece of granite specially reserved. Then another is similarly slaughtered, and then as many as each of the pilgrims can bring. In no length of time, the whole of the temple yard is converted into one horrible expanse of blood, rendering it too slippery to be safely walked over. The piteous cries and death throes of the poor devoted creatures greatly intensify the horror of the scene. The stench emanating from the blood mixing with the nauseating smell of arrack renders the occasion 796 all the more revolting. 788 One other higher and more acceptable kind of offering requires more than a passing 755 mention. When a man is taken ill of any infectious 782 disease, his relations generally pray to this goddess for his recovery, solemnly covenanting to perform what goes by the name of a thulabharum ceremony. This consists in placing the patient in one of the scale-pans of a huge balance, and weighing him against gold, or more generally pepper (and sometimes other substances as well), deposited in the other scale-pan. Then this weight of the substance is offered to the goddess. This is to be performed right in front of the goddess in 788 the temple yard. 796 The usual offerings being over, the homeward journey of the pilgrims is begun. Though the festival is called Bharani, yet all the pilgrims must vacate the temple on the day previous to the Bharani [776] day. For, from that day onwards, the temple doors are all shut up, and, for the next seven days, the whole place is given over to the worst depredations of the countless demons over whom this blood-thirsty goddess holds sway. No human beings can safely remain there, lest

they might become a prey to these ravenous demons. 788
In short, the Bharani day inaugurates a reign of terror 796
in the locality, lasting for these seven days. Afterwards, [776]
all the dirt is removed. The temple is cleansed and [783]
sanctified, and again left open to public worship. The
pilgrims return, but not in the same manner in which
they repaired thither. During the backward journey,
no obscene songs or expressions are indulged in.
They are to come back quietly and calmly, without any
kind of demonstrations. They get back to their respec- [431]
tive homes, and distribute the sandals and other pujah
substances to their relations and friends who have
elected to remain at home; and the year's pilgrimage
is brought to a close."

"The month Karkkatakam," Mr. Fawcett writes, 526
"when the Malayālis say the body is cool, is the time 875
when, according to custom, the Nāyar youths practice 564
physical exercises. At Payōli in North Malabar, when
I was there in 1895, the local instructor of athletics was
a Paravan, a mason by caste. As he had the adjunct
Kurup to his name, it took some time to discover the
fact. Teachers of his ilk are invariably of the Paravan
caste, and, when they are believed to be properly
accomplished, they are given the honorific Kurup. So
carefully are things regulated that no other person was
permitted to teach athletics within the amsham (a local
area, a small county), and his womenfolk had privileges,
they only being the midwives who could attend on the
Nāyar women of the amsham. His fee for a course
of exercises for the month was ten rupees. He, and
some of his pupils, gave an exhibition of their quality.
Besides bodily contortions and somersaults, practiced in 526
a long low-roofed shed having a sandy floor, there is
play with the following instruments :—watta ; cheruvadi,

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566 [462] work connected with the harvesting, separating the paddy from the stalks, etc. They are employed as a rule throughout the year by their masters; in leisure days however they are paid a little less than the stated wage.

[262] They take kanji (rice boiled in water) and toddy in the morning, toddy in the afternoon, cooked rice at night; they eat also fish and flesh. They behave well, are obedient and honest and loyal to their masters, very earnest about their work, but are completely illiterate. There are no schools for them in the village. [778] [796] They worship spirits in the shape of stocks and stones; and on the occasion of the festivals of their Gods and Goddesses they take a good dose of toddy and with drums and bugles and priests dance in the premises of the 'temple'.

564 There are sub-divisions among the Pulayas, Cherumas, Paraiyas, Nayadis, Malayas and others, who form separate castes among themselves and are restricted in their intercourse with one another.

[361] The Cherumas dwell in colonies of two or three families each, in low, small thatched huts near the land of their masters. It must be admitted that they are not treated properly by the high caste Hindus, though they form the backbone of agricultural labour in these parts. They are low paid and underfed and treated with contempt and sometimes with harshness by the other castes and their masters. It is a wonder that they still cherish obedience to their masters and earnestness in their work. There are a few who try to get rid of the yoke by running away, but the majority are contented and stay with their masters. They are experts in practical agricultural work and can face any sort of weather.

311 *Land and Occupation of land—*

	ACRES.
Area of wet lands	653·24
„ dry lands	937·21
„ lands watered by wells	...
„ common waste	18·81
Pasture other than common waste	33·94
Woods and forests	1,912·35
Fruit trees and scattered shade trees ...	301·48

312 There are altogether five public tanks in the village, most of which are not used for irrigation purposes at all, but for bathing, which is done by all at least once a day. There are no public wells. The cultivation of rice solely depends on the rains of the South-West Monsoon (June—September) which are copious, and of the North-East Monsoon in November. Every house however contains a well, from which water is drawn for drinking purposes and for watering the compound gardens in the summer. Water can be obtained at a very slight depth in most parts except at the foot of the hills. The sides of the tanks, usually not very large in size, are paved step by step with granite or laterite stones by which people can step down into the water for bathing. Water is lifted from the wells by means of pots for drinking purposes, but for watering gardens lifts of various sorts are used.

406 The water wheel, which costs about Rs. 35, is very rarely used except in *kol* fields where water has to be lifted out of the land.

Savings are not invested in industrial undertakings, there being 454
no openings for the same.

On the question of rural indebtedness, its causes and extent, 426
much can be written. There has been, I am told, an enormous
increase in indebtedness among all classes. Nearly 75 per cent
are in debt, especially so the poor agriculturists. The great
proportion of small landholders and agricultural workers, the want
of diversity of industry and occupation, the rise in the price of
commodities, the high usurious interest which a few take for money
advanced, the substitution of money for kind in taxes, the high
cost of education, lower and higher, to which Brahmans resort
now-a-days, the high value which people set on Government service,
however small the pay, all these are working, some generally and
others in particular cases, to cause and perpetuate rural
indebtedness. Co-operative credit societies could do much to help
the people out of it. I may also mention that litigation is also
responsible. For every paltry difference resort is had to the [691]
Munsif's or the Magistrate's Court, as there are no other means of
settling such differences. There are nearly twenty-five vakils or
pleaders in the Munsif's Court alone who cast nets to earn
something by favouring the litigious spirit. Among the Brahmans
the 'dowry system' is working some mischief. Every girl has to [582]
be given in marriage before her twelfth year and the bridegroom
demands a good round sum. Social reformers condemn the
system. A redeeming feature of it, viz., that that sum is a substantial [871]
help to the bridegroom's costly higher English education is not
wholly to be forgotten; and no Brahman stops his education until
thrown out by the University or money ceases to be forthcoming.

The proportion of debtors who have liberated themselves from
debt may be estimated at nearly a fourth.

Communal village life is unknown in the 'village.' The 621
Brahmans in the 'town' try to revive a 'Samooham' (gathering)
but with no success so far. There is no communal property.
Separate individual life is the order. The local Muhammadans and
Christians keep up a kind of unity within their 'castes' because of
their religion and Church. The Hindu temples in the village are
managed by the State Government. For every slight improvement 653
in the village the people have to approach the Government.
For example, the local tank has been in ruins for the last three or
four years; the Government of course helps the people, but the tank
is not yet repaired because of official delay and when it is actually
done, as was done once a few years back, the contractor earns a
good round sum as profit and the work is not properly carried out.

Temples and festivals.—The annual religious festival in the local 796 ●
temple at Watakanchery town which lasts for five days is conducted
by the Government. Rs. 128 and 128 paras of paddy (24 cwt.)
are spent; a contractor bids for the sum and he conducts the
festival.

The people of the village themselves conduct an annual religious festival at a temple nearly three miles to the north by collecting subscriptions. They spend nearly Rs. 300 on the occasion. It is pleasant to witness a procession in Malabar. So many elephants are ornamented and made to stand in array. The number of elephants depends upon the depth of the purse. Drum-beaters

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796 beat the drums according to their 'science' for two or three hours. The figure of the God or Goddess is taken on the back of the middle elephant in the row. There is a display of fireworks at night.

794 A few temples in the village are managed by private people or Janmis, usually Nambudri Brahmans. Such temples have landed property managed by these Janmis who generally make use of the profits. Recently the Government has been trying to encroach upon the temple properties in its capacity of *melkoyma*; this is very much resented by the Nambudri Jánmis.

The common people as a rule have no part or lot in temple management or expenditure.

426 *State loans.*—Only one person in the village has borrowed from the Government a loan of Rs. 400 to be paid back in ten instalments of Rs. 40 each with interest at 5 per cent. The small landholders do not approach the Government for help; the mediocre landholders rent their land to others; while the few big ones have money of their own if they want to make any improvement. The fact is that agriculture is routine work with many people; no permanent improvements are thought of by the majority.

Sanitary condition.—Plague and tuberculosis are not heard of.
164 Malaria only affects those who resort for agricultural purposes to the foot of the hills four or five miles east from the village. Attacks of cholera frequently occur among the local Muhammadans, who are as a rule quite insanitary, poor, living in low and ill-ventilated thatched huts or hovels; one is sick of the stinking smell when one approaches their huts. The local Christians, though equally poor, are better in this respect. The houses of most of the Brahmans and the majority of the Nayars are decent. The hovels of the lower castes and working men again are poor and insanitary.
[361] As the houses are not built in rows, but separate, each having a compound big or small, epidemic diseases such as small-pox when they come at all are easily avoided. But the case is different in the quarters of the Muhammadans and Christians, who build their houses in streets.

The chief endemic diseases are fever, rheumatism, attacks of bile.

There are plenty of snakes in the village everywhere. One
759 sometimes hears of deaths caused by snake-bites. There are however a few who pretend to cure snake-bites by incantations aided by medicines.

There is a Government free dispensary established in the 'town' where the Apothecary is a Sub-Assistant Surgeon. But most people resort to native (ayurvedic) physicians or vaidyans. Ayurveda, or the Hindu science of medicine, makes use of vegetable drugs both in the raw and dried state. The physician comes to your house and prescribes a certain mixture according to the directions laid down in his code which he has committed to memory in the form of verses. The drugs can be got from the market, or from a neighbouring hill, or even from one's own compound.

This science is handed down from father to son in certain families in Malabar who form even now some of the most distinguished native physicians in Malabar. Even in a petty village

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423 are sublet to the actual cultivators, who are a rack-rented peasantry. The Kanom tenant, even when he does not himself cultivate the 435 land, gets a higher return than the janmi on his capital; this is probably due to the insecurity of his tenure and his assumption of risks in relation to the actual cultivators. The renewal fees are heavy and many people contract debt to pay them. Some unscrupulous janmis or their agents arbitrarily enhance the rents payable by the Kanomdar and turn him out if he refuses to pay. The principal landlord of this village does not belong to this class.

● 796 The village spends between Rs. 150 and Rs. 200 annually on religious festivals. This is the common expenditure and is raised by subscription. It excludes small individual expenditures.

The village temple was built many years ago. No new one has been built.

164 *Sanitary condition.*—Malaria is unknown, but other fevers are occasionally seen. Cholera visits the village at rare intervals. Plague is unknown. Tuberculosis may be rarely met with. Small-pox also visits the village at rare intervals. From 125 to 150 out of every 1,000 children born die in their first year. Thus in 1915 while 81 children were born 10 died before completing one year. This is the figure given in the village register. It needs some correction and the figures should be slightly higher. The rate of infantile mortality varies with the seasons, etc. A few cases of snake-bites are recorded, but fatality owing to this cause is not high. I hear that sometimes the Hon'ble Moopil Nayar of Kavalappara (our representative in the Legislative Council) gives free medical help in such cases.

759 No reliable medical assistance of an effective kind is available. There are no English doctors in or near the village and few could afford to pay their fees even if they did exist. There are one or two ayurvedic physicians, whom one should more correctly call quacks.* They have no scientific knowledge and cannot properly diagnose. They take advantage of the simple credulity and superstition of the ignorant villagers and give an air of mystery to their art by the practice of superstitious rites akin to witchcraft. I believe there is much preventible disease in the village. Some remedy is badly needed. It would be a useful reform that the village officers and the village schoolmasters should know something of medicine, hygiene, and sanitation. Then they could at least instruct the villagers as to what ought not to be done in the care and treatment of the sick. There is a proposal now to found an ayurvedic college and laboratory at Shoranur, near our village. When it is accomplished a better state of things is hoped for, as the physicians would be really capable men and reliable, though practising the ayurvedic system, in which the people have faith.

273 Insanitary habits are rare. The Cherumas and other depressed 276 classes drink. Chewing of tobacco and betel is common, but this can hardly be called insanitary.

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* This remark does not apply to real students and practitioners of the indigenous system of medicine, but only to the unworthy representatives of the science in the village. There is high official and non-official testimony to the real worth of ayurveda as it *ought* to be practised, and as it is practised by many learned persons all over the country.